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OF
MUGHAL NORTH-EAST FRONTIER POLICY

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A

HISTORY

OF

MUGHAL NORTH-EAST FRONTIER POLICY

DLING A STUDY OF THE POLITICAL RELATION OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE WITH KOCH BIHAR, KAMRUP AND ASSAM

BY

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TO
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The object of the present work is to make an attempt to fill a gap in the history of Mughal India. The political relation of the Mughal Empire with the Mongoloid states of Koch Bihar, Kamrup and Assam on its north-east frontier is really an interesting theme, but no serious attempt seems to have been made so far to work it up. The suggestion for taking up this subject was first given to the writer by Professor Jadu Nath Sarkar, the distinguished historian of Aurangzib. He contributed a valuable article to the Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, March, 1921, containing an analysis of the contents of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*—a Manuscript History of Bengal and Orissa during Jahangir's reign, written in Persian by one of his own officers, which offered the prospect of a vast amount of new material for this topic. Through the kindness of the Dacca University authorities, a rotograph of the MS. was secured from Paris and placed at the disposal of the writer. The work more than fulfilled his expectations and proved really to be a mine of information, of course, from the Mughal standpoint. For the collection of materials extant in the Ahom and Assamese languages, as well as for a personal inspection of the scenes of leading events of the period, a visit to Assam, particularly to Gauhati and Shillong, was then undertaken. A critical and exhaustive study of the different sources was attempted, and the result embodied in a monograph on "Early Mughal Relations with Koch Bihar, Kamrup and Assam," which secured for the writer a Premchand Roychand Research Studentship of the Calcutta University in the year 1925. The subject was gradually worked up to its practical completion in the three subsequent instalments of the thesis submitted during the tenure of the Studentship (1926-28). The present volume comprises mainly the work of these years.

A few remarks regarding the treatment of the subject-matter may here be made. Chapters I and II are merely introductory. The former gives a rapid survey of the various forces—geographical, ethnological, social, economic, political and cultural, which determined the history of the kingdoms on the north-east frontier during the Mughal period, while the latter offers a connected account of the numerous invasions led by the Muslim Sultans of the pre-Mughal period in that direction. The main topic is mooted in chapter III, and the subsequent chapters deal with its various phases, which have been summarised at the end.

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The completion of this volume in the midst of the heavy preoccupations of the work at the University has made it inevitable that there should be defects in respect both of form and matter. Consistency in spelling has not always been maintained and diacritical marks could not at all be given. For want of sufficient time, a more detailed map could not be inserted : for a more thorough knowledge, the inquisitive reader is referred to Rennell's Bengal Atlas and the Maps attached to Robinson's Descriptive Account of Assam, and also to the District Maps of the Assam Province.

Notwithstanding these blemishes, the fascination and importance of the topic will, the writer hopes, justify his rushing into print. He will think his labours well repaid if the attention of more competent persons is drawn to this important aspect of Mughal history. Further, it might lead to a more comprehensive study of the history and culture of the contemporary Koch and Ahom states, and much of the material which had necessarily to be discarded as not strictly relevant to this topic, would then be used quite profitably.

The writer cannot conclude this note without acknowledging the debt of gratitude he owes to a number of persons and institutions in connection with the present volume. His thanks are due to the Dacca University authorities for giving him facilities for work, and particularly for sending him on deputation to Assam in the summer of 1925, for the search of original materials. He tenders his thanks also to the Assam Government and particularly to its Director of Public Instruction, as well as to the *Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti* and its Honorary Secretary for the loan of books and *Buranjis*. The writer is greatly indebted to Prof. J. N. Sarkar for his kind suggestion of the topic and for his loan of the two volumes of the transcript of the MS. *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*. His warmest thanks are due to Dr. R. C. Majumdar, Professor, Dacca University, Dr. Beni Prasad, Reader, Allahabad University, Mr. I. Banerji, Lecturer, Calcutta University, for reading through the work in MS. For help in proof-reading, the writer expresses his great obligations to his friends and colleagues, Messrs H. D. Bhattacharyya and P. B. Junnarkar. For help in preparing the Index, he is indebted to Mr. P. C. Chakravarty, Research scholar at the Dacca University.

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Dacca.
January, 1929.

Sudhindra Nath Bhattacharyya

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A
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INTRODUCTION.

Importance of the theme in the light of modern political developments in British India—Previous writers on the field—Blochmann—Gait—J. N. Sarkar—Their achievements and shortcomings—Possibility of improvement upon them firstly (1) *owing to the discovery of new material mainly contained in the Persian Manuscript Baharistan-i-Ghaibi, some Assamese Buranjis, Dr. Wade's two works* (*History of Assam and Geography of Assam*) *as well as in some Koch coins, and secondly* (2) *by a more intensive and synthetic treatment of the material already handled, viz. the Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai, the Purani Asama Buranji, the Akbarnamah, the Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, the Padishahnamah, the Alamgirnamah, the Fathiya, the Darrang Raj Bansabali, the Rajopakhyan, European travellers' accounts, as well as numismatic, epigraphic, and monumental sources—A critical estimate of all the authorities old and new—Scope of the work—its limited character, and its influence on the nature of the narrative, and on the perspective of the writer—Unavoidable defects—Repetition in a twofold sense—Their justification.*

The first quarter of the twentieth century had been a period of great political upheaval not only in the West but also in the East. The time-honoured despotic government in China, the biggest and most populous of the Asiatic states, was overthrown and a republic established in its place. This tremendous change let loose all the discordant elements so long kept under restraint,

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and China soon became the scene of a great and bloody Civil War. The foreign powers were not slow to take advantage of the internal confusion and dissensions to establish and perpetuate their influence in the Far East, the most prominent of them being Soviet Russia.

The reflex influence of the prevalence of Bolshevic ideas and principles in China could not but be felt in British India and held to be subversive of peace, security and the established government of the land. The "Red Menace", as the Bolshevic bogey is commonly termed, is thus getting great prominence in the British and Anglo-Indian Press. That it is no empty phrase and is the subject of anxious thought in responsible quarters was brought home to us all, quite recently, by the startling announcement of a project for a North-East Frontier Province, with Shillong as the capital. Though it has met with prompt official contradiction, the careful and well-planned tour, conducted lately by the Commander-in-Chief of India in person, through the hilly and strategic regions of Assam, Manipur, and Chittagong up to distant Burma, is quite a significant fact, and goes far to dispel the idea that such a province is altogether outside the pale of governmental policy.

Thanks to the cross-currents of international politics, the frontier problem in the north-east has thus been looming large before the government and the people of the country, and the necessity for a well-defined policy in that strategic region, similar to that alredy adopted towards the north-west, is now being keenly felt. With the centre of political gravity shifting towards the north-east, we reach the threshold of a new phase in the foreign policy of British India.

At such an opportune moment, the story of the origin and growth of a clear-cut policy of the Mughal Emperors—the lineal predecessors of the British power, regarding the north-eastern frontier of India cannot fail to be of absorbing interest to all lovers of history. That the Mughals evolved a definite policy in that quarter and pursued it tenaciously through thick and thin for more than a century, is a fact which

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appears to have been completely ignored in present times. No reference to this very important phase of Mughal Indian history finds a place in any standard work, and it is really a pity that while a number of excellent monographs have been written on select topics of this period, none at all has hitherto been attempted on this fascinating theme. What is worse still is the fact that the central event of the period, viz. the conquest of Kamrup during Jahangir's reign, is entirely omitted in current text books. In short, the history of Mughal north-east frontier policy, which, in its essence, is the history of the political relation of the Mughals with the three independent Mongoloid states of Koch Bihar, Kamrup and Assam, remains practically a virgin field of study, and a desideratum.

A few writers have, however, touched the fringe of this subject in their own way. Mr. (now late) Blochmann was the first to moot it in an article headed "*Koch Bihar, Koch Hajo and Assam in the 16th and 17th centuries, according to the Akbarnamah, the Padishahnamah, and the Fathiyah-i-Ibriyah*".* Though it must be conceded that his is the earliest and the only attempt so far made at an independent treatment of the topic, Blochmann appears to have failed totally to appreciate the underlying unity and continuity of policy of the Mughal Government towards the north-east frontier kingdoms, with the inevitable result that his thesis consists merely of a number of isolated quotations from standard Persian works of the period, and is chiefly of bibliographical interest and value. Moreover, the extracts taken are not always accurate and complete, and guilts of commission and omission may be laid at the door of their compiler.† But, by far, the most palpable defect in Blochmann's article is the marshalling of one-sided

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* JASB 1872, Part 1, pp. 49–100.

† One or two instances may be given. Blochmann has not at all mentioned the revolt of Raghu Deb against his royal cousin Lakshmi Narayan, nor the aid rendered by Isa Khan, the Afghan chief of "Bhati" to the former, and its sequel, which is detailed by Abul Fazl (*Akbarnamah, Vol. III*, pp. 1081-82, 1093–94, Beveridge's translation). Again, a passage (JASB, 1872. p.52) regarding the Koch

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evidence only—that of the Mughal historians. The Koch chronicles as well as the Ahom and Assamese native annals —the *Buranjis* as they are called, were probably a sealed book to him, or if he were conscious of their existence, he obviously underestimated their value.

The next worker in the field is Mr. (now Sir E. A.) Gait. His monograph on "The Koch Kings of Kamarupa"* may be regarded as the first attempt at a systematic and authoritative study of the origin, growth, and decline of the kingdoms of Koch Bihar and Kamrup, with special reference to their relation with the Muhammadans. Unfortunately, it is based mainly on one indigenous Koch chronicle, the *Darrang Raj Bansabali*, the gross exaggerations and palpable absurdities of which have not been critically examined. Moreover,the materials furnished by the Ahom and Assamese *Buranjis*, till then lost in obscurity, have remained unutilised, nor have the original Persian works available been consulted. These defects have visibly affected not merely the volume but also the quality of Gait's maiden enterprise.

The latter works of the same author do him real credit. He is unquestionably the father of historical research in Assam, and his "Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam," published in 1897, is a monument of his pains-

king Nara Narayan's relation with the Mughal Emperor Akbar is translated as follows :—"Rajah Bal Gosain who is the zamindar of Koch submitted again, and sent valuable presents from Bengal with fifty four elephants". A more faithful and complete rendering would be :—"Raja Mal Gosain, the zaminder of Koch, also again made his submission. First of all, the rarities of Bengal, including fifty four noted elephants were produced, and then the presents of the land-holder." It is easy to see that the faulty version of Blochmann has entirely obscured the true import of the passage. Another extract runs thus :—"When he (Bal Gosain) died, and Lachmi Narayan became Rajah, Patkunwar rebelled". A more accurate and literal translation is :—"When he died, the kingdom came to him (Lachmi Narayan). The Patkunwar raised the head of rebellion, and by the help of Isa had some success". The great difference in meaning and substance caused by the defective rendering may easily be appreciated.

* JASB, 1893.

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taking energy and great perseverance in exploring all possible sources—literary and otherwise, for a comprehensive history of that country. A vigorous search was made for the *Buranjis* written in the Ahom and Assamese languages, and the most important of them recovered and published in English. Besides these, coins, inscriptions and monumental remains in Assam were eagerly sought for and carefully gathered. The material obtained was then critically examined and ably summarised in the Report, so as to furnish a complete and accurate bibliography for the history of a province which had till then no history worth the name.

The result of the labour was embodied by Gait himself in a work tittled "A History of Assam," published in 1906. It is the first real historical work on Assam, on lines of modern research. A comparative estimate of the evidence furnished by the *Buranjis* and the Persian chronicles has therein been made, and a systematic and comprehensive history from olden times till our own presented. What enhances its value in our eyes is the fact that in it a detailed and authoritative account of the numerous Ahom-Muslim conflicts down to the end of the Mughal period for the first time sees the light of print.

But Gait's is a pioneer work, and, as such, has its defects. So far as we are concerned, its value has been somewhat marred by his failure to utilise the Persian authorities in original and consequently by his implicit reliance on Blochmann's faulty extracts from the same. Further, his assimilation of the copious materials furnished by the native annalists leaves much room for improvement. Nowhere is this more keenly felt than in connection with the history of Ahom-Mughal contact during the last two decades of Shah Jahan's reign and also during the post-Mir Jumla period. Gait has not done full justice even to Mir Jumla's Koch and Assam wars. He does not seem to have studied them in their proper perspective as the climacteric of the north-east frontier policy of the Mughal Emperors, nor does he fully appreciate and emphasise the far-reaching consequences

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of Mir Jumla's campaign on the subsequent history of Assam in general and that of the Ahom-Mughal relation in particular.

As regards Koch chronology, his ignorance, on the one hand, of the traditional custom, prevalent even now, of the issue of fresh coinage *only* on the occasion of the accession of a new ruler to the throne, and, on the other hand, of the valuable data furnished particularly regarding kings Lakshmi Narayan and Parikshit Narayan by the author of the *Baharistan*, has led him into an error which has been perpetuated by all others.

The last worker in this line, till now, is Professor J. N. Sarkar, the distinguished historian of Aurangzib. He gives a brief survey of Koch-*cum*-Ahom-Mughal relation prior to the advent of Mir Jumla, utilising in the main the material available to Gait. With regard to Mir Jumla's Koch and Assam campaigns and their sequel, he seems to have made an independent study of the principal Ahom and Assamese *Buranjis* along with contemporory Persian authorities extant, with a view to improving upon his predecessor. But he has not sufficiently emphasised the full significance of the wars undertaken by the first Bengal viceroy of Aurangzib in all their bearings, and his account of the Ahom-Mughal affairs for the two eventful decades following Mir Jumla's wars has been, in our opinion, rather sketchy. Apparently the limited scope of Professor Sarkar's work did not permit the full utilisation of the material available in the *Buranjis*.

These are all the writers who require special mention. Notwithstanding their individual merits and drawbacks, what all of them seem to lack is the proper angle of vision from which the theme should be approached. None of them appears to have fully succeeded either in assigning to it its due place in the history of the foreign policy of the Mughals or in treating it as an organic whole, but each has dealt with one or other of its many phases in relation to his own subject-matter.

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It will not probably be too much to say that there has hitherto been no conception of any such topic as Mughal north-east frontier policy, and even if there has been any, it has not been fully worked out probably from a sense of its being a baffling or unworthy task.

More than half a century has passed since the earliest work in our line was published, and about twelve years have elapsed since the last one was attempted. The time has certainly come when one should break the ice, and a systematic and thorough study of the foreign relations of the Mughals in north-eastern India should be undertaken.

The discovery within recent times of some valuable sources of information (literary, numismatic and otherwise), on the one hand, and a more intensive and synthetic study of the material found in the existing Ahom and Assamese *Buranjis* and other quarters, on the other hand, enable us to attempt a connected history of the relation of Mughal India with the north-eastern border states, in its various phases.

The most important newly discovered original authority is the Persian manuscript—*Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*. It is written by one Mirza Nathan,* later on titled Shitab Khan, who held important office in the newly conquered province of Kamrup, under Emperor Jahangir. He was the son of Ihtimam Khan, who,

* The full name is Mirza Nathan Alau-d-din Ispahani. Prof. Sarkar (JBORS, 1921) read the name as Mirza Sahan. I beg to differ from him for two reasons. One is internal, furnished by the manner of writing, and the other, corroborative evidence, from outside. The name is generally written in the MS. as مرزا شن Now what are the letters which form the last part of the name? Prof. Sarkar would have only three—*shin*, *he*, and *nun*, but I would suggest four—*nun*, *te*, *he* and *nun* and no *shin*. It cannot of course be denied that the three *noktas* appearing together, go to make *shin*, but it may also be pointed out that in many places the *noktas* appear clearly separate, and thereby provide for *nun* and *te* (e. g. p. 107b, end of the 8th line from the bottom, p. 237b, 9th line from the bottom). Further, the letters *nun* and *te* are written in a similar clumsy manner so as to look like *shin* in case of the name of Khonthaghat, a well-known territory in Kamrup (e. g. p. 169b. 8th line from the bottom, p. 176a, 10th line from the bottom). That Mirza Nathan is the name of the author is definitely proved by references

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according to the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* and the *Baharistan*, was the *Mir Bahr* of the Bengal *nawwara* during the viceroyalty of Alau-d-din Islam Khan. Mirza Nathan does not expressly mention the date of composition of his work, but internal evidence, furnished by the text as well as the fly-leaf of the autograph, leaves no doubt that, though begun during the reign of Jahangir, it was not completed till the early years of his son's rule. It is thus a valuable contemporary authority.

The manuscript *Baharistan* is a voluminous work (328×2 pages, with 21 lines to a page) professing to be a history of Bengal and Orissa, under the three *subahdars*, Shaikh Alau-d-din titled Islam Khan, his brother Qasim Khan, and Ibrahim Khan Fath-jang, as well as under the brief regime of the rebel prince Shah Jahan (1623—24). But its chief value, in our eyes, lies in the fact that it furnishes for the first time, a minute and well-connected account of Mughal policy towards Koch Bihar and Kamrup for the greater part of the reign of Jahangir. About one third of the whole MS. is devoted to it. The author brings before our mind quite vividly the rapid changes in Mughal relation with the various border states during his time. He shows how a policy of armed imperialism fructified first in the reduction of Koch Bihar to tributary vassalage, and then, in the conquest of its rebellious off shoot, Kamrup, and ended at last in a futile attack upon Assam, giving way to a new phase, of which peace, conciliation, reconstruction and defence became the watch-word. The working of the first stage of policy, in special reference to Kamrup and Assam, is delineated in an exhaustive manner; the operation of the second phase as well, particularly in Kamrup is described with a unique wealth of detail and

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to him in the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*, the *Purani Asama Buranji* and in Dr. Wade's History of Assam. Though the unfamiliar name of the Muslim officer naturally figures in diverse forms such as "Mirza Nathal", "Mirza Nathan", "Mirza Nant" etc, in the works just mentioned, there seems little doubt that all these mean one and the same person—Mirza Nathan, the author of the *Baharistan*.

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brilliant mastery of form. In short, almost a day-to-day account of the gradual consolidation and growth of Imperial authority in the first Mughal province in the north-east frontier, has come down to us from the pen of Mirza Nathan. This is really a topic regarding which our present knowledge is practically nil.

The authenticity of the *Baharistan* and of its author may now be deemed to have been established beyond doubt.* The author is no "obscure" person but a genuine historical figure, who himself made history in Mughal Kamrup during the period 1612—1625. He is thus not only a contemporary person, but an eye-witness and actual participator in the events he records. Perhaps the most conclusive proof of the historicity of the author is furnished by the mention of his name—though under different titles, in the most important of the Ahom and Assamese *Buranjis*, as well as in Dr. Wade's History of Assam, in connection with the account of the Mughal conflict with the Assamese, during the first two decades of the 17th century. As regards the work itself, the narrative is fuller and more systematic than that of the *Buranjis*, and it is remarkably corroborated by them as well as by the other Persian authorities, whenever they are available for comparison.

It is indeed a pity that no attempt has till now been made to utilise to the full this first-hand source. Gait has lately recognised its worth and has tried to profit by it. Unfortunately he has had no access to the original MS., and has remained satisfied with only a brief and imperfect synopsis, rendered in English. He has misread the name of the author, and though, as a matter of fact, he has inserted only a few stray passages from the voluminous work, he has been led to believe that he has utilised all the relevant portions.

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* A disparaging note was sounded by Beveridge (Journal of Indian History, January, 1924) regarding the historical value of the *Baharistan* which has been fully met by Prof. Sarkar in a subsequent issue of the same Journal.

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Besides the *Baharistan*, a good many Assamese *Buranjis* have come to light in recent times. Though they for the most part contain repetitions, oftentimes brief, of the narrative given in the works previously discovered,* they occasionally give good details and throw flash-lights upon many a dark corner in Ahom-Muslim history. The most important of them is the *Assam Buranji from Khunlung to Gadadhar Singh*, originally obtained for the Assam Government Collection of *Puthies*, and now preserved in the library of the *Kamrup Anusandhan Samity*, at Gauhati. It is written on the same lines as the previously discovered *Purani Asama Buranji*, but is sometimes more detailed and elaborate. It is of special interest in connection with the Mir Jumla and post-Mir Jumla periods of Ahom-Mughal history. Another new discovery is that of the *Assam Buranji from the Dihingia Raja to Pramatta Singh*. It is also to be found at Gauhati, and is of great importance for the same period.

A letter written by a contemporary Jesuit traveller, named Stephen Cacella, who visited Koch Behar in 1626-27, is an additional new source. It throws light on the question of Lakshmi Narayan's death, and confirms the date derived from the *Baharistan*. It also gives a glimpse of the then economic condition of Koch Bihar and of Raja Satrajit's career.

Over and above these sources of information, there is another work, written in English, so long almost unknown and unutilised, which yields valuable material for the history of our period as a whole. It is a History of Assam in MS.,† written by Dr. J. P. Wade, an Assistant Surgeon under the

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* A typical instance is furnished by the Assamese *Buranjis*, discovered in the American Baptist Mission premises at Gauhati, in May, 1925. Most of them are mere repetitions of the older chronicles, and add practically nothing to the stock of knowledge.

† As we are going to the press, we learn about the publication of Dr. Wade's MS. history by an enterprising Assamese gentleman, named Benudhar Sharma. Inspite of repeated attempts, we could not lay hold on a copy of that work, and so we have to rest content with the transcribed copy only.

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East India Company. He was attached to the British Expeditionary Force, sent to Assam by Lord Cornwallis in 1793, and utilised his eighteen months' sojourn there, in gathering material for a history which was completed about the year 1800.

Dr. Wade thus anticipated Gait's work by more than a century, and may be regarded as the pioneer historian of Assam. His is a voluminous production, and is divided into three parts, the last two being very useful for our purpose. A detailed history of Kamrup from the earliest times down to his own, is followed by an equally minute narrative of the conflicts between the Muhammadans and the Assamese, fourteen of which are mentioned as having occurred till the times of Gadadhar Singh.

Far from being a contemporary history, Dr. Wade's work is actually modern in its compilation. Yet it may well claim to be included in the list of authorities. For, the author was a keen and observant person, and mixed freely with the most intelligent and best informed of the natives of Assam, and also appears to have taken great pains in gathering material from the Koch chronicles and Ahom and Assamese *Buranjis* he could lay his hands on. There is unmistakable evidence of his utilisation of the most important of these indigenous sources, and his narrative shows substantial agreement with them. But what really enhances its historical value is the fact that it is often fuller and more comprehensive. Nowhere is this more clearly noticeable than in regard to the rivalry and hostility of kings Lakshmi Narayan and Parikshit Narayan and their tragic sequel, as well as in connection with the prolonged contest of the Mughals with the Ahoms. It is impossible to dismiss the new information lightly on the ground that its sources are not known,*

* Gait (History of Assam, second edition, preface, p. XIII) speaks of the work in disparaging terms, which it does not really deserve. He styles it as a "manuscript volume containing translations of certain *Buranjis* which are not forthcoming", and adds that it would therefore be unsafe to place very much reliance on them. True, the first part of Wade's book contains an English rendering

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as it is sometimes well-confirmed by contemporary Persian works.*

In addition to the history of Assam, there is another work of Dr. Wade which has received scant attention till present times. It is a political geography of Assam, written about the same time as the history, and based probably on an old Assamese compilation of the same nature, supplemented by personal observation and inspection.† Martin‡ gives us the contents of the work, which is invaluable in identifying old place-names, and tracing the ever-changing course of the rivers in Assam.

Valuable numismatic data are also now available to supplement the literary one. A half-coin of Lakshmi Narayan, a full coin of his cousin Raghu Deb, and the only coin yet known of Raghu's son Parikshit, have been found subsequent to the publication of Gait's work. Though in the second edition Gait has referred to them, they have not been used in revising his tentative scheme of Koch chronology.

So far for the new material. A more thorough and searching treatment of the material handled already, may be made to yield more fruitful results. This is mostly to be found in the Ahom and Assamese *Buranjis*, Koch chronicles, Persian works, contemporary European travellers' accounts, and in coins, inscriptions, and archæological remains scattered throughout the Koch region and Assam.

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of an Ahom *Buranji*. but the second and third parts comprise more or less a continuous narrative. Set in the general history, there is a vivid and detailed account, based on first-hand knowledge, of the Ahom administrative system. All these lead us to suggest that his work deserves a better appellation than "translation." As regards its historical value, the *Buranjis* on which it is based appear to have been authentic compilations, often containing more details than those now known.

* One typical example may here be given. Dr. Wade says that Parikshit was released from confinement at the Mughal Court, on condition of the payment of seven *lakhs* of rupees, and this is remarkably confirmed by the *Baharistan* (p. 235a).

† Cf. Gait's Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, p. 17.

‡ Eastern India, Vol. III, pp. 626–59.

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Let us take them one by one. Of the *Buranjis*, the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Buranji from Sukapha to Gadadhar Singh*, in Assamese prose, recently published under the name of the *Purani Asama Buranji*, hold the foremost place, not only by reason of their great antiquity, but also because they contain by far the most exhaustive and minute account of the long-drawn Ahom-Muslim warfare that has yet come to light. The other *Buranjis*, Ahom as well as Assamese, mostly base their narrative on, and often copy verbatim from, these parent sources.

Amongst the two principal works, the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* deserves more careful consideration on account of its greater wealth of detail, more accurate chronology and more systematic treatment of Ahom-Mughal history as a whole. Very little is however known regarding its author, and the period of its compilation too has not as yet been definitely ascertained. But internal evidence, supplied by the textual condition, makes it reasonable to assume that it was written about the end of the seventeenth century.

The paucity of information regarding the authorship and period of composition of the *Ahom Buranji* should not lead us however to underestimate its value. Its authenticity is unanimously recognised by workers in this line, and is proved beyond doubt, not only by the way in which it supports the contemporary Assamese chronicle, the *Purani Asama Buranji*, but also by the remarkable corroboration of its account by the Persian chronicles, whenever they are available for comparison. While the *Ahom Buranji* is generally silent with regard to Koch Bihar and Kamrup affairs, its narrative of the Ahom-Mughal contact during the reigns of Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzib shows substantial agreement with the contemporary Persian chronicles.*

* The truth of our contention will be realised if the accounts of some of the important episodes of the period (e. g. Assam campaigns of Sayyid Abu Bakr, of Islam Khan, and of Mir Jumla) as given in the *Ahom Buranji* and in the contemporary Persian works—the *Baharistan*, *Padishahnamah*, *Alamgirnamah*, and *Fathiya*, are compared.

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What enhances the importance of the *Ahom Buranji* is the fact that it may be made to yield more light on our topic than has hitherto been done. In conjunction with the *Purani Asama Buranji*, it illuminates the dark way, through the mazes of intrigue and treachery of Raja Satrajit of Bhusna, which runs the length of about a decade (1625-36), following the end of Mirza Nathan's monumental work. Next, it gives a more systematic and detailed account of the Ahom-Mughal war of 1636-38, particularly of its last phase, than is to be found in the other *Buranjis*, and the contemporary Persian chronicle—the *Padishahnamah*, and it is a pity Gait has depended too much on the last work, almost to the exclusion of the *Ahom Buranji*.

Nowhere is the value of the *Ahom Buranji*, as a source but imperfectly utilised, more clearly perceptible than with regard to the Mir Jumla and post-Mir Jumla periods of Mughal north-east frontier history. As to Mir Jumla's campaigns, it agrees closely with the contemporary Persian chronicles, and occasionally supplements them. This additional information, by no means inconsiderable, has till now been totally ignored. The kaleidoscopic changes in the fortune of the Ahoms and the Mughals for about six or seven years following Mir Jumla's death, have been very vividly and exhaustively dealt with *only* in the *Ahom Buranji*, the Persian works maintaining an almost unbroken silence thereon. The handling of the mass of material here by modern scholars has hardly been thorough, and affords scope for much improvement.

Next to the *Ahom Buranji*, the *Purani Asama Buranji* is a valuable original authority. Its authorship and time of compilation are shrouded in the same veil of obscurity as envelops those of the former work. Yet it is possible to suggest that it was composed about the end of the seventeenth century.* For, internal evidence, furnished by the style of writing as well as references in the text, makes it essentially a late seventeenth century work. Thus, it is a contemporary source for the history

*See Introduction to the *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 17.

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of Mughal north-east frontier policy at least in its concluding phases, which are crowded with many interesting and important incidents. Its historicity is established not only by its remarkable conformity to the *Ahom Buranji*, but also by the striking similarity of its narrative with that of the contemporary Persian works. It closely follows the former with regard to Raja Satrajit's career, the Ahom-Mughal conflicts of Islam Khan's time, and those of Mir Jumla and post-Mir Jumla periods, and shows general agreement with the latter (Persian works) especially on the Kamrup campaign, and the fate of king Parikshit, and on the Assam war of 1636-38, as well as on the antecedent circumstances leading to the recrudescence of imperialistic fervour under the first Bengal viceroy of Aurangzib's reign.

Its chief claim to attention lies in the fact that it contains much new information not available anywhere else, and it is rather unfortunate that this has not at all been recognised—far less utilised.* The *Purani Asama Buranji* alone emphasises the economic aspect of Mughal imperialism in the north-east frontier, and shows what a prominent part trade and commercial matters played in originating the dogged struggles with Assam during the early years of our period. Further, it enables one to throw light on probably the darkest corner in the history of Ahom-Mughal politics, *i. e.*, the last two decades of Shah Jahan's reign. The series of diplomatic letters, which form a sort of appendix to this work, have been of invaluable help to me in unfolding, for the first time, the eventful story of a forgotten era in the history of Mughal north-east frontier policy—an era of peace, diplomacy and busy trade and commerce with the Assamese, which terminated only with the outbreak of the War of Succession in 1658. With regard

* Though Gait was the first scholar to point out the historical importance of this *Buranji* (Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, P. 17), he has made little use of it in his work on Assam. In fact, he has excluded it from the list of the chief *Buranjis* he has given in the Introduction, p. XI. Prof. Sarkar has taken the cue from Mr. Gait and does not appear to have consulted it at all.

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to the history of Mir Jumla's campaigns and their sequel, the *Purani Asama Buranji* is a valuable supplement to the *Ahom Buranji*, and helps to clear up many of its confusing issues, while its treatment of the closing stages of the Ahom-Mughal contest, from 1670 onwards, is more systematic and minute than that of the latter. Inspite of this wealth of information, it is curious to note that the main workers on the field have almost totally passed it over, with the inevitable result that their account has been quite scrappy. This is particularly noticeable in connection with the history of the two months of hard struggle which centred round Gauhati—the Mughal capital, prior to its final fall to the Assamese in 1682.

Of the contemporary Persian works, whose more intensive and searching study yields additional information, the first to require mention is the *Akbarnamah*, the monumental Court chronicle of Akbar's reign, compiled about the end of the 16th century, by Abul Fazl, his guide, philosopher, and friend. The deep erudition and mastery of facts of the author is unquestioned, and, notwithstanding his pronounced partiality and the cumbrous phraseology and tedious rhetoric of his style, his work stands to this day as an unrivalled historical source.

It is from the *Akbarnamah* only that we get a glimpse of the opening phase of Mughal north-east frontier policy, marked by the establishment of a defensive alliance with Koch Bihar. This is not all. The disruption of the Koch kingdom, and the consequent political complications which drew the Mughals closer into the whirlpool of Mongoloid politics and ultimately paved the way for the transformation of their original policy into one of political aggression, have been quite unconsciously brought out by Abul Fazl. It is thus an indispensable authority for the first chapter of our history, and it is regrettable that Blochmann should content himself with only two short and incomplete extracts from it, which solely constitute Gait's Persian source.

The next work worth mentioning is the *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, the autobiography of Emperor Jahangir. Though it contains

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only a few stray references to the Koch Bihar king Lakshmi Narayan, the Kamrup ruler Parikshit Narayan and the conquest of his realm, a discerning eye may read in them the story of the former's exile and subsequent release from the Mughal Court.

Then comes the *Padishahnamah*—the official chronicle of the first twenty years of Emperor Shah Jahan's reign, written by Abdul Hamid Lahori. The authenticity of the work is well admitted, and though it is practically silent with regard to Koch Bihar affairs, it is in fact the only contemporary Persian work bearing on Ahom-Mughal history of the age. It throws a new light on the genesis of the policy of armed imperialism launched under the Bengal viceroy Alau-d-din Islam Khan in Kamrup, and gives in outline the story of its conquest, which is of great corroborative value. It alone, amongst the Persian works, illuminates the dark period towards the end of Jahangir's reign, of which Bali Narayan's unceasing hostility is the key-note. Again it is our only authority, of course from the Mughal standpoint, for the renewal of open contest between the Mughals and the Assamese in the ninth regnal year of Shah Jahan. The details of the conflict, studied in comparison with those found in the *Buranjis*, yield valuable results, and Messrs Blochmann and Gait's handling of the topic is far from comprehensive.

The *Alamgirnamah* of Mirza Muhammad Kazim is another valuable original authority. It is a Court chronicle, covering only the first decade of Aurangzib's reign. A casual reference here to the Ahom-Mughal war of 1636-38 suffices to confirm the story of its ultimate failure detailed in the *Buranjis*. The author furnishes an authoritative account of the circumstances which paved the way for the renewal of aggressive policy towards Koch Bihar and Assam under Mir Jumla, and follows it up by details of actual operation and the ultimate tragic end. Interwoven with the narrative is a valuable sketch of the two frontier states—their geography and natural resources, their kings and the people, as well as their political,

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social, economic and military condition. In spite of its limited scope, an intensive study of the *Alamgirnamah* as far as it goes, in the light of the contemporary *Buranjis*, is of great profit to the historian of the north-east frontier policy of Mughal India.

The *Fathiya-i-Ibriya* is the official history of Mir Jumla's Koch Bihar and Assam expeditions,compiled by his *waqia-navis* Shihabu-d-din Talish. The scope is really very narrow, yet the work is of great value as its theme symbolises the climacteric in Mughal foreign policy in the north-east frontier. The genesis, the progress and the end of Mir Jumla's wars are described in such a vivid, thorough, and systematic way as to make the narrative unique in character. Though there is a remarkable coincidence, not only in language and phraseology but also in substance, between the *Fathiya* and the *Alamgirnamah*, the treatment in the former is more detailed and comprehensive than in the latter. This is clearly brought home to us when we study the descriptive account of Assam and the Assamese that finds place in them. A comparative estimate of the material found in the two contemporary Persian chronicles and that derived from the *Buranjis* is well worth an attempt, and it has enabled me to present probably the most interesting episode of the period in a more exhaustive and methodical manner than has hitherto been done.

The Darrang Raj Bansabali of Surjya Khari Daibajna is probably the most important indigenous source for the first chapter of the history of Mughal north-east frontier policy. The author, a reputed scholar and a man of great piety, flourished in the last quarter of the 18th century, and wrote his work in verse about the end of its last decade. Though far from being a contemporay record of men and affairs and full of fulsome eulogy and glaring exaggeration of the traditional achievements of the early rulers of Koch Bihar and Kamrup, the *Bansabali* contains the most detailed narrative of their life and career, and, when tested by the more sober and authentic version of the *Buranjis* and the

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Persian works, yields valuable result. The simple and frank style of the royal panegyrist fails to hide his attempts at suppression or distortion of facts unpalatable to his patrons. The author hints at the establishment of friendship between the Mughal Emperor Akbar and the Koch king Nara Narayan, and gives the most detailed account of the division of the latter's kingdom which led to the origin of the Kamrup state. The interplay of forces which paved the way for Mughal intervention in Koch politics is ably brought out, and much new information on the point added. Shorn of its absurdities, the *Bansabali*, conjointly with the *Akbarnamah*, offers the most comprehensive and authoritative study of the early phases of Mughal north-east frontier policy. It is a pity the poem ends abruptly with the conquest of Kamrup and the flight of Bali Narayan (brother of the ex-king Parikshit) to Assam and is thus useless for subsequent chapters of our history.

The *Rajopakhyan* holds the second place amongst the native Koch chronicles. It was written by a state official of Koch Bihar, named Jadu Nath Ghosh, during the reign of King Harendra Narayan, in the first quarter of the 19th century. Thus it is essentially a modern work. Though the author tells us in the preface that he derived his material from the works of the learned *pandits*, who flourished during the times of Nara Narayan and his great-grandson Pran Narayan, there is a great tendency towards omission and exaggeration of known facts. It is, however, valuable for the fact that it furnishes the only connected history of the Koch kings for the entire period under review. In matters where the writer had no motive for concealing or distorting facts (*e.g.*, chronology of kings), and in case of events with regard to which he was more favourably placed in point of time, his work may generally be relied on. Though he is almost silent about Koch-Mughal affairs of the first eighties of the 17th century, he is our only source in regard to the history of the two closing decades, which witnessed the last phase of Mughal policy, marked by the gradual disruption of the helpless vassal state of Koch Bihar.

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In addition to the Persian and native literature, the accounts left by a good many contemporary European travellers and adventurers may also be made much use of. Most of them, however, refer to the Mir Jumla period, and cast light upon the fortunes of the Koch Bihar and Assam wars, as well as upon the political, economic and military resources of the conquered tracts. Of these, the itinerary of Bernier and Manucci and the reminiscences of the Dutch sailor Glanius deserve prominent mention.

A fair amount of epigraphic and numismatic material, and also monumental remains are available, whose close study sometimes clears up dark and doubtful points. The inscriptions which throw light on the earlier period are few, only two or three, found on temple-walls or rocks, being worth noting. One is of Sukladhvaj (brother-general of the second Koch king Nara Narayan), another is of his son Raghu Deb; besides these,there is one Ahom inscription of the time of Susengpha (Pratap Singh).* As regards the latter period, particularly the post-Mir Jumla one, a large number of inscriptions (in Persian as well as in Sanskrit) are forthcoming. Most of them are inscribed on cannon, while a few are found on mosques and rocks. Their historical value is great, for they corroborate remarkably the narrative of the *Buranjis*, regarding the vicissitudes of the protracted Ahom-Mughal struggle, on which the Persian chronicles are generally silent.†

As to numismatic evidence, the coins of the earlier Koch kings Nara Narayan and Lakshmi Narayan, and their Kamrup contemporaries—Raghu Deb and Parikshit Narayan,are of great value in determining their chronology, regarding which much confusion still prevails. Further, coins being regarded as the symbol of independent status, the aforesaid coins help us in clearing occasionaly the tangled web of Koch-*cum*-Kamrup-Mughal history. With regard to the Ahom coins, they require no special mention, as very few of them are available for our

*See Gait's Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, p.p.4–5.
†*Ibid*, pp. 5. 9, 29.

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period, and even when they are forthcoming, they scarcely yield new light, as the *Buranjis* are quite exhaustive and comprehensive in their nature.

Coming to monumental sources for our period, we must admit they are not quite abundant ; yet they are of considerable historical value. While they offer corroborative evidence in general, they are of great use in settling chronological details. The archæological remains may be divided into two broad classes—those left by the Koches and the Ahoms, and those left by the Mughals as well as by the Medieval Bengal Sultans. Of the Koch monuments, the most important of them are in the form of temples, *e. g.*, the temple of Kamakhya near Gauhati built by Sukladhvaj (1565), the temple of Vishnu at Hajo made by Raghu Deb (1583), and the temple of Kamateswar at Gosainimarai (Koch Bihar) made by Pran Narayan (1665). Besides these temples, a magnificent embanked road, styled Gohain Kamala Ali, was constructed by Nara Narayan, through North Kamrup and Mangaldai.

Very few of the temples and other memorials raised by the Ahom kings have survived, and those that exist are sadly deficient in dates. Amongst them, the Saiva temples of Dergaon and Bishnath are ascribed to Pratap Singh, while the one at Umananda, opposite Gauhati, is attributed to Gadadhar Singh. The remains left by the Mughals and the Bengal Sultans are mostly in the form of mosques, the most noted of them being the one, styled Poa Mecca, near Hajo, built to the memory of a Muslim saint, Sultan Ghiyasu-d-din Aulia, who flourished probably early in the 16th century. Another important monument is a mosque on the Rangamati Hill, about six miles north-east of Gauripur, built in 1688-89.

These are the main sources, old and new, literary and otherwise, on which the present work is based. Now to come to its scope, it is primarily a political narrative, in which the origin, progress, and result of an interesting phase of Mughal history, *i.e.*, Mughal foreign policy in the north-east frontier of India, has been described in as exhaustive and systematic

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a manner as has been found possible. The history of Mughal north-east frontier policy, which, in its essence, is the story of the relation of the Mughal Emperors with the Mongoloid states of Koch Bihar, Kamrup, and Assam, during a period of just more than a century (1576-1682) may well be likened to a great drama in several acts. It opens with the establishment of a defensive alliance between the Mughal Emperor Akbar and the Koch Bihar king Nara Narayan, immediately after the conquest of Bengal. A varied combination of circumstances prepared the way for the second act, in which the Mughals appear as the exponent of a policy of armed imperialism in the north-east frontier. Koch Bihar is subjugated, Kamrup conquered, and Assam raided. The signal failure in Assam principally leads to a change of scene, and the next act finds the Mughals settled to a policy of peace, conciliation and defence. The drama reaches its climax in the next act, when Mughal imperialism reaches its high water-mark under Mir Jumla. Koch Bihar is annexed, and Assam overrun as far as its north-eastern extremity. Then the anticlimax comes. Renewed failure in Assam resuscitated the old policy once more, and the last act finds the Mughals strictly on the defensive with regard to Assam, and offensive by way of defence, in case of Koch Bihar. The great historic drama ends in a tragedy, for, before the first half of Aurangzib's reign had run out, the Mughals lose their last vestige of power as a result of the final capture of Gauhati by the Ahoms.

The limited scope of my work has affected its character and made it only a compendium of dry facts. The origin and development of Mughal foreign policy in the north-east frontier region being the burden of the theme, details of political history have been brought in only so far as they illuminate it, while social, economic and other aspects of Mughal, Koch, and Ahom popular life have been excluded altogether. The effect is exceedingly trying. There is nothing to relieve the dull monotony of the narrative. The whole atmosphere echoes with the din of battle and the beat of

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war-drum, and page after page is filled with details of land and naval encounter, night-attacks, sieges and surrender, peace-moves and their break-down. The goddess of fortune is proverbially fickle, and she sometimes favours the Mughals, and sometimes their opponents—the Koches and the Assamese.

My perspective has also been strictly circumscribed. As my primary aim has been to unfold the various phases of the north-eastern frontier policy of the Mughal Empire, the march of events and the development of the subject have necessarily been tuned to the Mughal standpoint, and only so much of the history of the various frontier states concerned has been included as is really helpful to me.

A good deal of repetition has crept in, but this has been found to be unavoidable. The history of the various Mongoloid states in north-eastern India is so closely interconnected, and the interplay of political forces so overlapping, that it is impossible to deal with any one of them, all by itself. Yet historical continuity and uniformity demands that the story of the relation of each of these states with the Mughals—the prime factor, should be independently treated. This explains the inevitable repetitions which have found their way in Chapters III and IV, to the great detriment of historical interest and literary flourish.

Repetition in another sense may also be noticed. The peculiar geography of the north-east frontier region so greatly shaped its history that the story of the numerous campaigns, directed thither by the Mughals and their predecessors from Bengal, has invariably the same outline—the same initial success, followed by the same dismal failure, owing to self-same causes, *viz.* difficulties of communication and food supply, unhealthy climate, and the peculiar military tactics of the local people.

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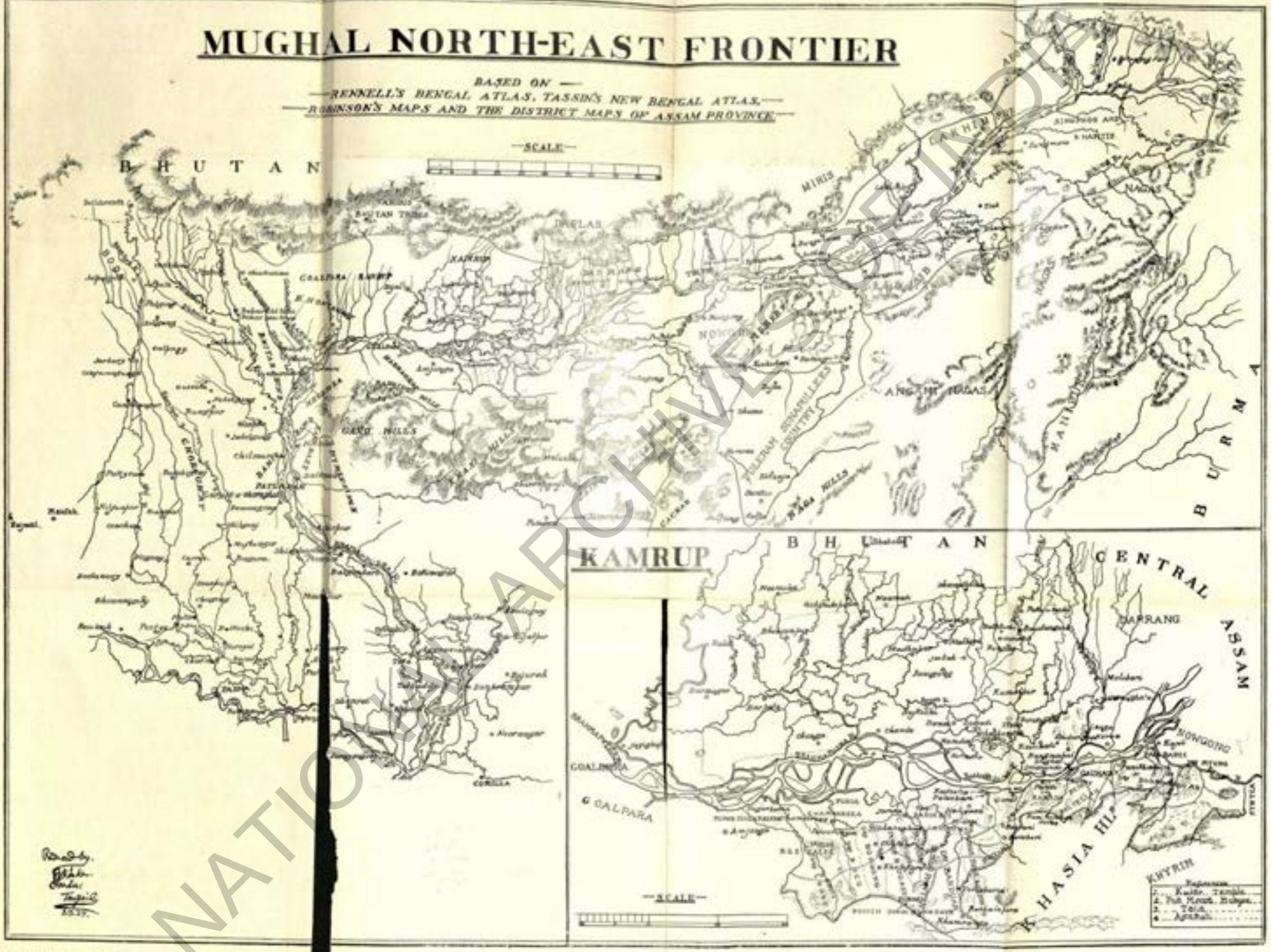
MUGHAL NORTH-EAST FRONTIER

BASED ON —
—RENNELL'S BENGAL ATLAS, TASSIN'S NEW BENGAL ATLAS,—
—ROBINSON'S MAPS AND THE DISTRICT MAPS OF ASSAM PROVINCE—

—SCALE—



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A
HISTORY OF MUGHAL NORTH-EAST FRONTIER POLICY

CHAPTER I.

THE NORTH-EAST FRONTIER—THE LAND, THE PEOPLE AND THEIR EARLY HISTORY.*

Section I. (A) The Land.

The term "North-east Frontier" connotes with reference to present-day British India something entirely different from what it did with regard to the Mughal Empire of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While it is now applicable to the hilly region lying to the north and east of Sadiya, which commands the route to China, it meant in the Mughal age the Mongoloid states of Koch Bihar, Kamrup and Assam, which bordered serially on the province of Bengal in the north-east.

General topography and physical features of the North-east frontier tract.

The region covered by these principalities is in many respects of a peculiar character. Like Ancient Egypt, it is a land of strange shape—great length but very little breadth, and, like it again, it may be said to be watered by one life-giving river (the Brahmaputra). The greater part of the country is shut in between high and inaccessible hills, which girdle it on three sides—north, south

* A general outline of the geographical, ethnological, political, economic, cultural and other forces current in the north-east frontier region, particularly during the Mughal period, has been attempted here, mainly with a view to bringing out their bearing on my theme. It is far from an exhaustive account of the various entities of the Koch and Ahom national life, bnt only a plain and simple treatment of them to the total exclusion of all disputed and controversial matter.

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and east, while on the fourth, is a river, the Karatoya. The only point of contact with the outside world is on the west, and particularly south-west, and it is here that the Mughal *Sarkar* of Ghoraghat touched the fringe of Koch domain which was naturally the first to come within the pale of Imperial foreign policy.

From a geographical point of view, the north-east frontier tract may be divided into two sharply defined zones—the Brahmaputra valley, and the territory lying to the west of it and reaching up to the Karatoya. The latter region covering the old state of Koch Bihar consists of a large well-cultivated plain of oblong shape, intersected by numerous streams. It stretches north and south, and gradually narrows down till it attains its smallest breadth between the south-west and the south-east. Its most striking feature is the general absence of hills and rising grounds, and the consequent dead level of the land. The entire tract is rather low and liable to inundation, to guard against which, extensive barriers, termed as *als*, were raised in Mughal times. Another peculiar feature of this region is the existence of thick jungles, especially around the capital city. The *Alamgirnamah* speaks of dense bamboo and cane groves abounding in Koch Bihar, very little of them being now seen except in the north-east.

The general topography and physical features of the Brahmaputra valley, which may be said to begin east of the confluence of the Sankosh with the Brahmaputra and which includes the old states of Kamrup and Assam, are quite different from those of the afore-mentioned tract. It is almost of triangular shape, with the territories centring round Sadiya as the apex, and those bordering on the Garo and the Khasia Hills on the south and the south-west as the base. As regards its physical aspects, it presents "the peculiarity of a perfect plain, studded with numerous clumps of hills rising abruptly from the general level, and surrounded by lofty mountains, and intersected in all possible directions by innumerable streams and rivulets, which, issuing from the border mountains, at length empty themselves into the great channel of the Brahmaputra."

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The lands in the valley may in general be divided into three great classes, with reference to the level of the waters of the Brahmaputra. The first division consists of the mountains and hill-ranges, which again may be sub-divided into three sections—first, the great mountain chains skirting the north and the south, secondly, independent groups of hills or continuations of the northern and southern mountains, and lastly, isolated hills and hillocks. From the north-west to the north-east, the different offshoots of the Himalayas are named after the various hill-tribes inhabiting them *e. g.*, the Bhutias, Akas, Daflas, Abors, Miris, and Mishmis, while beginning from the extreme south-west, the mountain chains take the name of the Garos, the Khasias and various branches of the Nagas. The north-eastern hills are inhabited by the Khamtis and the Singphos, while the Patkai range on the south-east, the dwelling of the aboriginal Nagas, merges itself in the mountains of upper Burma.

The second class consists of hills lying in groups, large and small, on the plains of the Brahmaputra valley, and forming either independent units by themselves, or continuations of the northern and southern ranges. The largest group is that of the Mikir Hills which are insulated from the southern mountains by the valley of the Jumna river, and cover north-eastern Nowgong and a greater part of Sibsagar on the west. The only other group of hills, which impinges upon the flat plain of the Brahmaputra valley appears at Gauhati. But the hills of this group are rather continuations of the Khasia and Jaintia ranges, and do not form separate units. Other similar prolongations of the southern hills are to be noticed along the entire length of southern Kamrup, covering the Boko, Chhayagaon and a part of Palasbari *tahsils*, as well as throughout the southern portion of Goalpara, from Kari Bary on the south-west to Habraghat on the south-east. Of the projections from the northern mountains, the most considerable is a spur which shoots forth into the north of Balipara *mauza*, Dt. Darrang.

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Besides the projections and independent groups of hills, isolated ones skirt along the north and south banks of the Brahmaputra, particularly in Goalpara, Kamrup and part of Darrang. Of the hills lying on the north bank, those in Khonthaghat *mauza*, in Goalpara, and in Patidarang and Hajo *tahsils* in Kamrup, and in north Mangaldai, Singri, and Tejpur in Darrang, are noteworthy. South of the Brahmaputra, the hills in the Chamoria, Chhayagaon and Boko *mauzas* in Kamrup, and those around Kaliabar in Nowgong, are prominent. The peculiar feature of these isolated chains besides their small extent, is that they are everywhere surrounded by level land, which in general is remarkably low, so that the inundation of the rains reaches their very bottom, facilitating trade and commerce along it.

The second division of the lands is what may be termed "the diluvial plain of the valley, its level being generally above the ordinary inundations of the Brahmaputra, and of its tributaries." To the north of the great river, plains of varying breadth stretch almost in an unbroken line throughout the whole valley, except where they are partially interrupted by the alluvial beds of the hill-streams, the variation in breadth of the plains being dependent, in a great measure, on the number and height of the rocks or hills that protect the lands from the devastating aberrations of the river. One of the projecting points is at Bishnath, above Tezpur, where the rocks rise to a height of about 30 ft. above the highest flood-level of the Brahmaputra. The lands from that point back to the hills form a high and dry plain, extending about 25 miles. The low hills, round Tezpur and Singri likewise, prevent encroachments of the Brahmaputra upon the plains of Charduar and Chutiya which lie to their west.

South of the Brahmaputra, the width of the diluvial plain is greatest immediately east of the Dhansiri, stretching for about 30 miles back to the Naga Hills. The river, at this point, takes a northerly course owing to the great projection to the north of the Mikir Hills and the absence of rocks on the north bank, leaving a great plain on the south.

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The alluvial deposits of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries form the third land division of the valley which derives its name from it. These lands are very extensive, especially so, along the channel of the main river, and are of great fertility and elevation, from the vast *chars* of pure sand, subject to annual inundations, to the great islands, raised too high by drift sand and deposits of vegetable matter to be flooded by the adjacent streams.

The most typical of the alluvial plains is the vast Kajali plain (Nowgong) lying between the Brahmaputra and its tributary, the Kalang, which stretches for a distance of 42 *kos* east to west, according to the author of the *Fathiya*. It possesses, for the most part, an extraordinary fertility of soil. Another alluvial tract of almost equal extent is the Majuli island, which forms the northern part of Sibsagar District. Besides these, islands of smaller extent, all more or less subject to devastation, are to be found along the whole course of the Brahmaputra. Other alluvial plains are noticeable on the banks of the Bar Nadi and the Manas rivers ; these appear to have been covered with extensive jungles and impenetrable reeds during the Mughal period.

River system

The river system of the north-east frontier is an important but difficult study*. It may be grouped in two sections, the great basin of the Brahmaputra being the dividing line. In the tract west of the river, the natural drainage is from

* The contemporary Persian and indigenous authorities are almost silent here. Even when they offer information, it is rather vague and inaccurate. Moreover, river-beds are constantly changing, old channels disappearing and new ones forming, so that the precise course of any river at a particular time cannot easily be ascertained. I have avoided treading upon controversial grounds, and have attempted to give a rough idea of the origin and course of those rivers which gained prominence in the history of the Mughal period, mainly on the basis of the contemporary literature, the valuable map left by the Dutch governor Van den Broucke in 1660, Rennell's Bengal Atlas, and the more recent maps.

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north-west to south-east. Beginning from the west, the rivers deserving prominent mention here, are :—

(1) The Karatoya. It was the traditional boundary between Bengal and the kingdom of Kamarupa of old, and continued to demarcate the frontier of the Koch kingdom and the Mughal Empire. A great deal of uncertainty and confusion prevails with regard to its origin and course. Though the source of the Karatoya is not clearly indicated in Van den Broucke's map, there is no doubt that during his time the river flowed straight in a southerly direction, through the present Rangpur, into Bogra, with Ghoraghat to its right, so that the description of its course by Dr. Hamilton and Glazier seems fairly applicable to olden times as well. The former writer indicates as the upper part of the Karatoya what later on has come to be known as the Kurta river, which flows from the hills between the Mahananda and the Tista, and passing through Jalpaiguri joins the Atrai in Dinajpur. According to Glazier, the Karatoya "takes its rise amongst marshes at the north-west corner of the district (Rangpur), and after forming for sometime the boundary between it and Dinagepore, crosses Govindagunge thanah into Bogra."

As regards the other rivers existing in this region during our period, some clue is furnished by the author of the *Alamgirnamah*, according to whom "two large rivers, besides two small streams enter Bhitarband and these, with others, fall into the Sankosh, which borders Koch Bihar from the side of Assam (i.e., the east)."*

(2) Of the two large rivers mentioned, one † appears to

* The author adds :—"During the rains, the rivers are unfathomable...some have rocky beds and transparent water". It should here be pointed out that the Persian chronicler has committed a great error in making the rivers flow into the Sankosh, rather than into the main channel of the Brahmaputra, which the Sankosh itself joins.

† The identity of the other large river is not easy to guess. Apparently one is led to believe that it is the Tista, now a considerable stream, whose old beds lie scattered everywhere in Rangpur. But this river does not at all figure in the chronicles of our period. It may not be unreasonable to suggest that its

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be the Durlah, Dhorla or Dharla as it is variously spelt. Its old course is not known for certain. Its fountain-heads lie in the bosom of the Bhutan Hills. The river has a south-easterly direction, flows through Patgong, and further down takes a sudden bend due south and falls into the Brahmaputra, skirting the Bhitarband *parganah* in the west. It played a great part in pre-Mughal as well as in Mughal times. Kamatapur, the capital of the Khen kings, stood on its west bank, and its extensive ruins were observed by Dr. Hamilton in 1809, just south-east of the point where it takes an abrupt southerly turn. From the nomenclature of some of the places on its bank (Mogul Hat etc.,) it is easy to infer that the river figured prominently also in Mughal days.

(3) The next important river of the Koch region is the Sankosh. Though no indication is given regarding its source, this river finds frequent mention in the Persian and Koch chronicles as well as in the Assamese *Buranjis.* It marked the physical boundary between the state of Koch Bihar and its offshoot Kamrup, as also the cultural barrier between Bengal and the north-east frontier tract.* From Mirza Nathan's work it appears that the course of the Sankosh in his time was not very different from that indicated in Rennell's Atlas, according to which the river rises from the Bhutan Hills, flows to the right of "Joygong" (the site of a strong Koch fort of olden times) in a southerly direction, forming the eastern boundary of the Koch realm, and joins the Brahmaputra, along the eastern border of Bhitarband at a place, where

course at that time was not very different from what it was prior to the great inundations of 1787, which gave it a south-easterly direction. The Tista had then probably a south-westerly course, west-ward of the Karatoya, and joined the Atrai in Dinajpur so that it was really included in the Bengal *subah* and was outside the limits of the north-east frontier kingdoms.

* Cf. Dr. B. Hamilton, quoted in Martin's Eastern India, Vol. III, p. 383 :— "The two rivers, from the source of the Songkosh to 40—50 miles below its junction with the Brahmaputra, form a boundary that is very remarkable...the inhabitants to the east of which are many centuries behind their western (Bengali) neighbours."

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the great river, after having run long from east to west, takes a sudden bend due south. Rennell terms the upper course of the river "Surradingah" and the lower one, "Sunecoss". The Sankosh was a stream of considerable length and volume in Mughal times, and after the conquest of Kamrup, the local officials had to cross it off and on in order to chastise the rebels who sought asylum in Koch Bihar.

As we have already remarked, the Brahmaputra valley proper begins east of the confluence of the Sankosh with the great river. The western part of the valley comprised the state of Kamrup. The first river of this region, which is very often referred to in the *Baharistan*, is the Gadadhar. Unlike its present poor condition, it seems to have been in Mughal times a large and important stream, which rose from the hilly region to the north-west of Kamrup, and after a southerly course, joined the Brahmaputra near Dhubri. King Parikshit's favourite residence Gilajhar (*Gilah* of the Persian chronicles, renamed Jahangirabad alias *Gilahnau*, after its conquest in Jahangir's reign) was situated on its western bank, about 10 miles above Dhubri, and the river was the scene of the most decisive naval battle fought in course of the struggle.

East of the Gadadhar, an important river according to the *Baharistan*, is called by the same name Sankosh. After the capture of Gilajhar, the victorious Mughals had to cross this river, *en route* to Kamrup, in search of the fugitive Parikshit. It is obviously the same stream named "Little Sunecoss" by Dr. B. Hamilton. It rises in the wilds of Bhutan, flows in a south-westerly direction, and joins the Gadadhar about 2 or 3 miles from its confluence with the Brahmaputra. Rangamati, an important fortified post of Mughal Kamrup, seems to have been situated on this river.

Further to the east of the "Little Sunecoss," is the Gaurang river which finds occasional mention in the *Baharistan*. It appears to have been a small stream, flowing parallel to the "Little Sunecoss" into the Brahmaputra, and was frequently

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traversed by the Imperialists in course of their conflicts with the Koch rebels of the Khonthaghat region.

The next important river is the Manas (*Banas* of the *Baharistan* and the *Padishahnamah*). It figures prominently in all the standard Persian works and the *Buranjis* as the divider of the Kamrup kingdom (and after its extinction, the Mughal province of the same name) almost into two equal parts, the tract lying to the east of the river enclosed by the Bar Nadi being regarded as Kamrup proper. The old course of the river cannot be described with precision. The Manas rises in the Bhutan Hills, and after a winding course falls into the Brahmaputra, opposite Goalpara. Barnagar, the capital of the Kamrup kingdom, stood on its bank. Jogighopa, which stands near the confluence of the two streams, has always been a place of great strategic importance. In Mughal times it held the key to the province of Kamrup, and was the site of an impregnable hill fort, flanked by the Brahmaputra on the south and the Manas to the east, and many a battle was fought over it between the Imperialists on the one side and the Koches and the Assamese on the other. Even now "boats can proceed from Jogighopa through Kamrup into the Brahmaputra at Hajo, avoiding the rapidity of the great stream".

Further east of the Manas is the river Bar Nadi, famous in Persian and Assamese chronicles as marking the eastern boundary of Kamrup kingdom and afterwards of Mughal Kamrup, and the western frontier of the Ahom state. Like the Manas, it rises in the Bhutan Hills and changes its channel from time to time. After a fairly long southerly course, it empties itself into the Brahmaputra, east of Gauhati. Many a diplomatic and armed contest raged during our period over the crossing of this river by the Mughals as well as the Ahoms, and Gauhati, which then occupied an extent of hill country on both banks of the Brahmaputra, east of the Bar Nadi, was for long the sport of the contending powers. It was a strategic place, the hill on each side forming "a spacious amphitheatre equally well-fortified by nature and by art."

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The territory around Gauhati was of great political and military importance. A few miles to the west, on the bank of a branch of the great river Brahmaputra, was Hajo, the capital of Mughal Kamrup up till 1639, when it was transferred to Gauhati. Near by was Kohhata, a frontier town on the Bar Nadi. A *kos* further off from Gauhati, on the same bank, was the fortified post of Srighat. Opposite to it, on the south bank, was Pandu, the seat of the local navy.

East of the Bar Nadi lay the realm of Assam. "In the number of its rivers, Assam may be said to exceed every other country of equal extent." This fact has been epigrammatically put by Mulla Darvish, the panegyrist of Mir Jumla's Assam campaign, as follows :—"Its (Assam's) rivers are beyond limit and estimate like the minds of the wise...they are more numerous than the waves of a river". Including the Brahmaputra and its two great tributaries, sixty one rivers have been known to exist of which 34 flow from the northern mountains in Assam, and 24 from the southern, besides many others of less consequence.

"The grand feature of the physical geography of Assam, which belongs to the whole valley and from which it derives its most appropriate name, is the Brahmaputra." "This noble river," says Robinson, "may be classed amongst the largest in the world." It is in fact the life-blood of Assam, and forms the water-shed of the whole region. In spite of the great advance in geographical research, the source of the great river may be regarded as still not beyond dispute.* It rises beyond the mountains of Nara, and flowing through the mountainous tract of Sadiya, continues in a south-westerly direction through the heart of Assam. Beyond Rangpur-Ghargaon, about 120 miles to the west, it divides itself into two large and deep streams, called the Lohit and the Dihing. The former glides with a gentle current in a south-westerly direction, and

* The *Alamgirnamah* vaguely says :—"The Brahmaputra rises from the territory of Khata (China), and, joined by numerous tributaries, flows violently...Its banks up to the border of Assam are broad and high."

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receiving many tributaries from the northern mountains, reunites with the Dihing at Phogadura Gown. The Dihing moves with a rapid current in the same direction as the Lohit, and meets it about 40 miles above Kaliabar. This river is very important in Assam history as the scene of many a conflict with the Mughals under Mir Jumla, and Lakhugarh, which stood at the confluence of the two streams, was for a time the seat of the Imperial navy. Down Lakhugarh, the grand united stream reassumes the name of the Brahmaputra, and proceeds in a westerly and south-westerly course to within 10 miles of Kaliabar, where it sends off a considerable branch southward called the Kalang.

The Kalang flows by Kaliabar, Nowgong, Dimarua and Kajali, and after a semicircular westward course of about 160 miles, rejoins the Brahmaputra at Kajalimukh, 20 miles above Gauhati. Kajali, east of the confluence of the two rivers, was a strong frontier post of the Ahom kings, and, as such, was many times the object of Mughal attack.

After its junction with the Kalang, the Brahmaputra resumes its rapid westward course, and traversing the Kamrup and Goalpara Districts, reaches south of Dhubri, where it bends suddenly due south and ultimately joins the Ganges at Goalundo (Dt. Faridpur, Bengal).

The long narrow Assam valley of nearly 400 miles, from Sadiya to Dhubri, is divided by the Brahmaputra into three geographical areas, called *Uttarkol*, *Dakhinkol** and *Majuli* or the "Great Island". The first denotes the tract lying on the north bank of the river, the second that lying on the south, while the third is the large island in the middle, formed by the fork of the Lohit and the Dihing.

The greater part of *Uttarkol* consists of a cultivable and populous plain, well watered by a number of tributaries of the Brahmaputra. East of the Bar Nadi, the more important of

* The terms are used by the Persian chroniclers in respect of the tract included in Mughal Kamrup as well as in Assam, and I have applied them in the same wide context.

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them are the Bharali and the Subansiri. The former is frequently mentioned in the Persian chronicles, and is the largest river in Darrang. It rises in the Aka Hills, and after an easterly course, between two ranges of hills, turns sharply to the south, and joins the Brahmaputra in a winding course, a few miles above Tezpur. East of the confluence of the two rivers lies Samdhara, an impregnable fortified post of the Assam kingdom. Many a conflict raged on the Bharali and around Samdhara during the Mughal period. The Subansiri, the other considerable stream, rises in the Miri Hills, and after a winding course joins the Brahmaputra at Haboongh, north of *Majuli* island.

Dakhinkol is generally hilly, and abounds in dense forests. According to the *Fathiya*, "there are more inaccessible strongholds and defensible central places" here than are to be found in *Uttarkol.* Of the rivers in this region, those included in Goalpara are not noteworthy except the Jinjiram or the Jijiram. According to Dr. Hamilton, this river rises in the north-western extremity of the Garo Hills, and passes in a winding course through a wide low valley, at the lower end of which it divides itself into two branches. The eastern branch, named the Bolboli, enters the Urpad *bil,* and turning east, joins a small stream, the Jinary, which rises from the south end of the Jira Hills, and running south joins the Bolboli. The Jinari gives its name to the united river, which then flows into the Brahmaputra about six miles above Goalpara. The western branch of the Jijiram, which retains its name, receives some contributions from the same large marsh of Urpad, and reaches the Brahmaputra, after washing the rocks of the Singimari. The Jijiram and its numerous tributaries were traversed frequently by the Imperialist officers in Kamrup for the suppression of local insurrections, in the early years of their occupation of the country.

The next important river in *Dakhinkol* is the Koolsi, the principal tributary of the Brahmaputra in Kamrup District. It rises in the Khasia Hills, and runs at first in a northerly course, but afterwards flows westward through the Chamoria

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mauzas, and being enriched by the waters of numerous minor streams, empties itself into the Brahmaputra, about 8 miles above the Nagarberra Hills. Of the other considerable streams in *Dakhinkol*, the Kalang has already been mentioned. Next to it is the Kapili. It rises in the Jaintia Hills, flows through Nowgong, and joins the Jamuna, and finally merges itself in the Kalang near Raha.

A number of note-worthy rivers of *Dakhinkol* are included in the modern Sibsagar District, of which the largest (excepting the Brahmaputra) is the Dhansiri. It rises in the Naga Hills, flows in a northerly and easterly course between the Naga and the Mikir Hills, and passing by Golaghat, makes a westerly bend, falling into the Brahmaputra opposite the western end of *Majuli*.

East of the Dhansiri is the Dikhu, which also originates in the Naga Hills, and after a north-westerly run, joins the Dihing, at Sitamalighar. The river has an important place in the history of Ahom-Mughal struggle of the Mir Jumla period ; for, it had on its east bank Ghargaon, the Ahom capital, whose possession and retention were the grand objects of the combatants. As the Dikhu was navigable only for a little distance above the capital, the Mughal navy was separated from the army and left behind at Lakhugarh, and this caused a world of troubles to Mir Jumla. Other streams, which were the scenes of bitter contest, are the Darika (*Dandika nalah* of the Persian works) which now falls into the Dilli, a sister affluent of the Dikhu, about 10 miles above its mouth, and the *Dilli* (*Dilli nalah*) itself.* The latter has its source in the Naga Hills, and after a long winding course falls into the Dikhu, four miles above its junction with the Dihing. The only other important river in the neighbourhood is the Disang, which rises in the Naga Hills, flows in a deep channel through

* It appears that during Mir Jumla's time, the two were only slender streams so as to deserve the appellation of a *nalah*. The *Fathiya* (JASB, 1872, p. 90) makes the Darika flow into the Dihing, about one *kos* north-east of Ghargaon. This is obviously an error, as it contradicts the text itself.

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the Sibsagar District, and joins the Dihing a little above Kuntiaputta.

Majuli is the third natural division of Assam. It is a vast alluvial plain, formed chiefly of the silt deposited from the Subansiri. It is intersected in several places by channels of communication between the Dihing and the Lohit which in reality convert it into a cluster of islands called *chapoori*; but in addition to these subdivisions of the great island, numerous smaller ones, styled also as *chapoori*, formed by various branches of the principal streams, range nearly along its whole length. The populousness, fertility and luxuriant vegetation of *Majuli* are clearly testified to by the author of the *Alamgirnamah**. During the struggle with Mir Jumla, the Ahom commanders, from their island retreat, harassed greatly the Mughal soldiery.

Soil.

The soil of the north-east frontier region is greatly varied in character. By far the greater part of the territory west of the Sankosh river consists of a mixed free soil, which is ash-coloured and singularly uniform in character, and is composed of light friable loam, superimposed on a deep bed of pure sand. It is very fertile and the *Alamgirnamah* and the *Fathiya* both testify to the abundance and productivity of the Koch Bihar state of the time.

The soil of the Brahmaputra valley, though varied, is on the whole, exceedingly fertile, and well adapted to all kinds of agricultural purposes. "For the most part, it is composed of a rich black loam, reposing on a gray sandy clay, though occasionally consisting of a light yellow clayish texture." The Persian chroniclers are unanimous regarding the richness of the soil of Assam, which is greatly due to the annual inundation of the Brahmaputra. Robinson remarks, "The rapidity with which wastes composed entirely of sand, newly washed forward by the river current during floods, become converted into rich pasture

* He says, "It is an island well inhabited and in an excellent state of tillage. It contains a spacious, clear and pleasant country extending to about 50 *kos*."

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is astonishing". This fertilising process has been continuing without interruption.

Such a productive soil cannot but yield abundant vegetation, and the whole north-east frontier tract has always been rich in its plant and vegetable resources. According to the *Fathiya*,

Flora.

"Koch Bihar is well known for its vegetation and flowers.....Oranges are plentiful, as also other fruits and vegetables." The *Alamgirnamah* agrees with the *Fathiya*, and the two add that the capital city contains beautiful gardens, and the territories round it are well cultivated. Very little is known, however, about the details of the food crops grown in Koch Bihar during the Mughal period. Stephen Cacella, the Jesuit traveller, who visited the Koch capital in 1626-27, speaks rather vaguely about the density of population and plenteousness of the necessaries of life there.

As regards the plant-life, the western, northern and north-eastern borders of the Koch kingdom, lying close to the Morang and Bhutan Hills, abounded in dense forests, while impenetrable jungles of bamboo and cane surrounded the capital and its outlying parts.

Though there is paucity of detail regarding the flora of the Koch kingdom, abundant material exists for that of the Assam valley. The *Fathiya* and the *Alamgirnamah* testify to the rich and varied fruit and flower trees growing there.* Mention is made of mangoes, pine-apples, sugarcanes, plantains, jack fruits, oranges, citrons, limes, *panialahs* etc., besides wild apricots, jams and pomegranates. Pepper and ginger were found in abundance. Varieties of sweet-scented wild and garden flowers, and odorous herbs flourished, and these were not to be met with anywhere else in the whole of India. The most valuable aromatic plant available was the aloe wood which grew

* Cf. *Fathiya* (JBORS, Vol 1, p. 185) :—"From Kaliabar to Ghargaon houses and orchards full of fruit trees stretch in an unbroken line...From Lakhugarh to Ghargaon also there are roads, houses and farms in the same style. The *Alamgirnamah* also (Asiatic Researches, Vol.II. p.173) speaks in the same strain.

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in the hills of Namrup, Sadiya and Lakhugarh. *Sadaj*—a long aromatic leaf (Sanskrit *Tejapatra*), was in plenty, and trees for rearing silkworm were nurtured.*

Besides these fruit and flower trees and aromatic plants, bamboo, cane and various kinds of trees were also grown. According to the *Fathiya*, the trees of the hills and plains of Assam are "exceedingly tall, thick, and strong," and the remark holds good even in present times. The hills of the interior are studded with thick forests, while the elevations skirting the banks of the Brahmaputra, particularly in Lower Assam, are overgrown with reeds and wild grass. Various kinds of teak and timber are even now found in abundance, and these made possible the building of numerous Ahom forts as well as the delicate wood-carving and lattice-work of the Ahom royal palace at Ghargaon, at which the author of the *Fathiya* marvels. Further, these furnished material for the large Ahom fleet.

Over and above this wild growth on the surface of hills, big and small, extensive forests covered the plains below, particularly in *Dakhinkol*. From the *Baharistan* we learn that the extensive *parganah* of Khonthaghat, which flanked Mughal Kamrup on the west and stretched along *Uttarkol* (covering the greater part of modern Goalpara), was filled with dense jungles. Other forest areas in *Uttarkol* were in Darrang, while in *Dakhinkol*, the region now included in the southern portions of Goalpara and Kamrup, was interspersed with wild forests.

Of the food-crops raised in Assam, the chief, according to the *Fathiya*, is rice. Thin and large varieties were rare, and wheat, barley and lentil were not grown.

Fauna.

No emphasis is laid by the contemporary writers on the zoological wealth of the region west of the Sankosh. This is quite in the nature of things, as the greater part of that tract consisted of a vast plain affording little shelter to animal life.

* The Dutch sailor Glanius, (English translation, p. 162) who accompanied Mir Jumla in Assam, says :—"The mountains yield pepper, agar wood, sanders (sandal wood) and simples."

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The *Buranjis* and the Persian works, however, agree with regard to the richness of the animal kingdom of the Brahmaputra valley. The most noted animal, from the standpoint of war and trade, was the elephant. It had a prominent place in Koch and Assamese military array, while ivory, a valuable article of merchandise, occasioned many a diplomatic and armed contest between the Mughals and the Assamese. Frequent mention is made in the *Baharistan* of *khedah* operations, undertaken by the Imperialist officers in Khonthaghat *parganah* with the help of professional elephant-catchers, who were granted special *jagirs* for their maintenance. The *Buranjis* refer to numerous intrusions of the Mughals into the wilds of Darrang (forming part of Ahom domain), for capturing elephants. The abundance of large, high-spirited and well-proportioned elephants in the hills and jungles of Assam is testified to by the chroniclers of Shah Jahan and Aurangzib's reign alike. 500 or 600 of them, we are told, might be procured in one year.* The Assam king, too, kept a batch of professional elephant-catchers in his domain. Besides the elephant, the deer, elk, *nilgau*, musk-deer, fighting ram, partridge, and the cock, water-fowl, goose and goat were also plentiful. The one peculiarity in the zoological resources of Assam, which greatly affected its military strength, was the scarcity of horses.†

Climate.

From the climatic standpoint, the north-east frontier country appears to have been divided into two distinct zones—the region west of the Sankosh, and that to the east of it comprising the Brahmaputra valley. While the Persian chroniclers speak of the salubrity and mildness of the climate of Koch Bihar in un-

* It is to be noted further that the sale of elephants was considered a disgraceful act in Assam. The Dutch sailor Glanius, confirms in his own way the Persian works when he says (p. 163) :—"Elephants are so common that the country, fruitful as it is, is not sufficient to feed them ; therefore they are always lean."

† Cf. *Alamgirnamah* (Asiatic Researches, Vol. II, p. 172) :—"Assam produces neither horses nor asses," and *Fathiya* (JBORS, Vol. I, p. 191) :—"Asses, camels and horses are rare and difficult to procure in this country."

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mistakable terms,* they have nothing but aversion and fear for the general unhealthy air of Assam, and it must, in fairness to them, be admitted that their remarks are in substance true even for present times. "The climate of the inhabited and lonely places on the banks of the Brahmaputra," says the *Fathiya*, "suits natives and strangers alike. But at a distance from the river, the climate agrees with the natives, while it is rank poison to foreigners." It adds that in cold weather, the diseases of cold and moisture, and in summer, troubles due to excessive secretion of bile, overpower foreigners with greater violence than the natives, and that the air and water of its hills (*e.g.*, Namrup, at the south-eastern corner of Assam) are like the destructive Simoom and deadly poison to natives and strangers alike.

Not to speak of the Assam realm, the climate of many places in Mughal Kamrup also appears to have been unwholesome. Mirza Nathan speaks of the unhealthy air of Khonthaghat *parganah*, and of Kohhata in *Uttarkol*, as well as of the territory of the chiefs of the Upper Hills, such as, Nilirangili (in modern Habraghat *mauza*, Dt. Goalpara) in *Dakhinkol*.† Even the air and water of Hajo, for long the Mughal headquarters, is branded as unhealthy, so much so that a *faujdar*, named Shaikh Kamal, and 370 of his men, were all at one time stricken with a severe malady.‡

Notwithstanding the fact that the Brahmaputra valley enjoys a far more equable temperature than is general throughout India, the warm weather being very moderate and the nights, throughout the year, cool and refreshing, its climate has always been far from salubrious. The noxious exhalations engendered in the low marshes, *nalahs*, reeds and wilds, so frequent in the country, affect the health of the Lower Assam valley, and give

* The *Fathiya* (JASB, 1872, p. 66) says, "Koch Bihar is well-known for its excellent water and mildness of climate," and the *Alamgirnamah* too marks the climate as generally wholesome.

† Cf., pp. 179b, 289b, of the MS. *Baharistan*.

‡ Cf. p. 285b. *Ibid*.

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rise to malignant fevers there. The southern side of the Upper Assam valley is exceedingly moist and damp, and breeds pulmonary and other complaints, while the northern side, with less jungle and morasses and a freer circulation of air, is comparatively healthy.

Rains.

While the region west of the Sankosh appears to have been marked by moderate and normal rainfall, that to the east of that river has always been noted for its heavy rain and the inordinate length of the rainy season. The *Baharistan* speaks of the prolonged stay of the rains in Kamrup, and the *Fathiya* makes similar remarks with regard to Assam :—"It rains for about eight months (in the year) and even the four months of the winter are not (altogether) exempt from rain." The season commenced then, as it does now, in March and lasted till about the middle of October. During March and April, the fall was very irregular and scanty, but from May to September it was more steady, copious and even violent. Owing to excessive and long-continued rains, the bogs, *jheels* and marshes with which the country was spotted, had a rank growth of reeds and wild grass, breeding noxious airs and adversely affecting the health of the surrounding places. The commencement and the cessation of the rainy season were then, as they are now, the most unhealthy periods in the year.

As will be seen later on, the unusual rainfall had, however, one redeeming feature. It proved to be an important factor weighing in favour of the Assamese, in course of their numerous conflicts with the Mughals.

Section I. (B) The People.

From an ethnical standpoint, the river Bar Nadi may be regarded as dividing the north-east frontier territory into two distinct units. While the Koch and the Mech appear to have been, during our period, the most prominent racial elements in the tract lying to the west of that river,

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i. e., Koch Bihar and Kamrup, that to the east i. e., Assam proper, was dominated by one race—the Ahoms.* Besides them, the northern and southern mountains, skirting the Assam valley, were inhabited by people of kindred races, *e.g.*, Akas, Daflas, Miris, Nagas, Khasias, Garos, etc., and the plains of Lower Assam were the stronghold of the Kolitas,† who, according to Col. Dalton, "are the only pure descendants of the Aryans who first colonised Assam."

Origin of the Koch.

A great deal of divergence of views exists amongst the ethnologists with regard to the origin of the Koch and Mech races. Though it is hardly our task to tread on disputed grounds, we cannot avoid them altogether. While according to Risley, the Koch are "of Mongolo-Dravidian origin, with the Dravidian element preponderant in them," Waddel would deny their Dravidian origin altogether and describe them as "distinctly Mongoloid, though somewhat heterogeneous." Dalton, however, thinks the Koch to be quite unlike the members of the Indo-Chinese family and assigns them to the Dravidian stock, thus agreeing, in the main, with Risley. Hodgson and Latham, on their part, class the Koch as members of the great Mongolian race, though, as regards the Mech, they appear to agree with Dalton that they are of Indo-Chinese extraction.

Whichever of these rival theories be adopted regarding the racial affinities of the Koches, there can be little doubt that the people commonly known as the Koch are a mixed race, and that the "true Koches were a (pure) Mongoloid race very closely allied to the Meches and the Garos," not only in physical

* It may be noted in passing that while I have differentiated the Ahoms as the conquering tribe from the original inhabitants of Assam (the most noted amongst whom were the Kolitas) as needed, I have generally used the words "Ahom" and "Assamese" as practically synonymous, to indicate the people of Assam as a whole.

† The *Fathiya* (JBORS, Vol. I. p. 192) says :—"The original inhabitants of the country are of two races, the Assamese (rather the Ahoms) and the Kolita".

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type but also in language and tribal institutions.* The original Mongoloid Koches, soon after their Hinduization, not only adopted the caste-name of the more numerous Hinduized community around them, *viz.*, the Rajbansis of Rangpur and Dinajpur, whose physiognomy was distinctly Dravidian, but freely intermarried with them and thereby paved the way for the evolution of a mixed type—the Mongolo-Dravidian type. The varying proportion observable in the intermixture of the two distinct ethnic elements in the various localities that had been the cradle of the mixed race, seems to have been the cause of the diversity of opinion regarding the racial affinity of the original race. The Koch in Rangpur and Dinajpur strike one as, in the main, Dravidian, but as he proceeds north and north-east, Mongolian traits predominate.

While the origin of the Koch is controversial, that of the Ahom is, however, free from doubt. Their physical type is unmistakably Mongoloid, and their language, script, and ancient traditions are closely analogous to those of the great Shan race. The Ahoms are thus genuine Shans, and the special section to which they belong had long occupied the northern and eastern hill-tracts of Upper Burma.

And of the Ahoms.

The story of the advent of the Koches and the Ahoms and their rise into political power runs on different lines. The Koches proved to be the ablest and most enterprising of the numerous cognate tribes who had long been resident of the same locality, and they gradually welded them into one political entity, under their leader, Biswa Singh. But the Ahoms were a race of alien conquerors who, early in the 13th century, had wandered, under their chieftain, Sukapha, into the north-eastern extremity of the Brahmaputra valley and gradually imposed their authority over the natives of the soil. The

* The Persian chroniclers in their own way confirm the Mongoloid physiognomy of the Assamese. They speak of their short, uncouth stature, their dark complexion with a yellowish tinge, their paucity of hair etc., and these, according to Risley, are some of the distinctive traits of the Mongoloid type.

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foreigners, when they came, were, however, "quite unconscious of the fact that their descendants were destined to bring the whole valley under their rule and to set a limit to the eastward expansion of the empire of the Mughal conquerors of India."

Character of the Koch and Ahoms.

Interesting side-lights on the character of the north-east frontier people are thrown by the Persian chroniclers and the *Buranjists*. It is curious to observe that while the former seem to be greatly biassed against the Ahoms and have taken great pains to paint them in the blackest dye,* they betray no such prejudice against the Koches, probably on account of their early political subservience to the Mughals, and, in fact, have passed lightly over their character-sketching. In spite of this prejudiced outlook, the Ahoms have come out in their great physical strength and hardihood, their heroism and love of independence, as well as their cruelty and blood-thirstiness, and their fierce and brutal manners. This is quite natural in the case of a mountaineering people who lived far away from the centre of Indo-Muslim culture, and so retained most of their primitive habits as well as their individual entity. The strong and weak points in Ahom character are generally confirmed by the Ahom and Assamese *Buranjis*.

Their Religion and Culture.

On account of their geographical proximity to Bengal, the Koches were made to feel the influence of Hinduism, soon after their establishment as a strong political power in the region covered by the modern Rangpur, Jalpaiguri, Koch Bihar as well as part of Dinajpur. They soon discarded the tenets inculcated by the Kolitas, the original priesthood of the tribe, and came under the fold of

* The *Fathiya* (JBORS, Vol 1, P. 190), among other things, tells us that the Assamese "are unrivalled in cruelty, treachery, rudeness, unique in the world in deception, lying and breach of faith," while, according to the *Alamgirnamah* (Asiatic Researches, Vol. II, P. 176), "the virtues of compassion, kindness, friendship, sincerity, truth, honour, good faith, shame and purity of morals have been left over their (Ahom) composition."

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the Brahmanical faith.* The traditional account of the origin of the Koch royal power bears unmistakable evidence of the Hindu influence, while the Saiva leanings of the first king, Biswa Singh, and his sons, Nara Narayan and Sukladhvaj, are clearly brought home to us by the Koch chroniclers.

But, side by side, with the worship of Siva and Durga, Vaishnavism also made a great headway amongst the Koches. This appears to have been primarily due to the inevitable intercourse with their Vaishnava neighbours, the Rajbansis. Thanks to the reformation inaugurated by Sankar Deb, and promoted by his able disciple, Madhav Deb, Vaishnavism seems to have acquired gradual predominance in the land of the Koches. The suffix "Narayan" (one of the many names of the Hindu God, Vishnu) attached to the name of the successive Koch kings, beginning with the second of the line, as well as to that of their rival dynasts, Raghu Deb and his descendents, and the great tenderness for animal life attributed to the Koch people of his age by the English traveller, Ralph Fitch, and the decidedly Vaishnavite colour of Raghu Deb's inscription in Hajo temple—all seem to testify to the silent religious transformation of the Koches.

The effect of the adoption of a more humanising creed was inevitably felt on Koch political history. Even before the second Koch king had died, a pause in political expansion had come, and the subsequent history of the state is one of slow but steady degeneration and disintegration, the meteoric brilliance of Pran Narayan's reign being excepted.

The development of Ahom religion appears to have been peculiar in more than one sense. Though the Ahoms are descended from the Shan stock, whose language and literature bear clear influence of Burmese Buddhism, no trace of Buddhism is to be found in their own religion. Again, notwithstanding their ethnical affinity and geographical proximity to the Koches who were thoroughly Hinduized by the beginning of the 16th

* The *Alamgirnamah*, p. 692, vaguely refers to the "Mech" and "Bihar" (obviously a mistake for "Koch") as "infidels and idol-worshippers."

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century, the Ahoms did not, in any appreciable degree, adopt Hindu faith and culture till the middle of the 17th century had run out. It is indeed difficult to explain the first phenomenon, but the second one is hardly so.

For a considerable period after their advent in the Assam valley, the Ahoms were busy settling down in their new habitat and it was not till three centuries had elapsed that they succeeded in consolidating their power in their immediate neighbourhood, at the expense of the cognate tribes of the northern and southern hill-ranges, so as to be free to move lower down the Brahmaputra and feel the civilising influence of the Hinduized Koches. Further, the Ahoms remained long in the Assam valley, as an armed minority, wedded to their tribal and social institutions, and refused to assimilate the superior civilisation and culture of the subject people. These circumstances—late contact with the more civilised and Hinduized Koches, the conservative and exclusive spirit of the Ahoms together with their geographical isolation from Bengal, seem to explain their belated Hinduization and cultural regeneration.

The gradual commingling with the Koches in Koch Bihar and Kamrup, and the establishment of political, social (especially matrimonial) and economic intercourse with them, led to the filtration of Hindu ideas and culture in Assam. As was the case with the Koches, it was Saktaism which at first found favour with the Ahoms. It seems Saktaism was more in keeping with their own racial traits and habits of life. Meat-eating, wine-drinking, hardy hill-men as the Ahoms originally were, they naturally took to a creed which offered a good scope for the continuance of their old practices, though in a modified form.

It was during the reign of king Pratap Singh (1603-41) that "the influence of the Brahmins increased rapidly" and Hinduism began to find great favour with the Ahoms, but it would be mistake to suppose that they were Hinduized all at once. For a long time—at least till the end of the 17th century, the old creed and

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rites as well as the new ones existed side by side.* While, on the one hand, Hindu temples were erected, Hindu priests were honoured and their culture promoted, on the other hand, the worship of the tribal deity, Somdeo, was continued under the old priests, the *Deodhais*, and the old habits, customs and diet were still freely indulged in and the old tribal language retained as the medium of intercourse, particularly amongst the upper classes, so that this curious jumble proved really bewildering to outsiders and provoked from them uncharitable remarks. The authors of the *Fathiya* and the *Alamgirnamah* were well nigh astounded at the non-observance of caste-system, the practice of burial of the dead instead of cremation, and the indulgence in indiscriminate animal diet by a people who professed to adhere to Hindu faith and manners.†

As Vaishnavism with its tenderness for animal life and its gospel of peace, faith and love did not appeal to the Ahoms, we find a periodical persecution‡ of the rapidly growing sect of

* A typical example is furnished by Gait (History of Assam, p. 162) in regard to the reign of Sujinpha (1675–77). His officers " were required to take a two-fold oath, one in the presence of Brahmans before a *Salagram* of Lakshmi Narayan, a copy of the *Bhagavat* and a *tulsi* plant, and the other, according to the old Ahom method, by the shedding of blood before the great drum."

† Cf. *Alamgirnamah* (Asiatic Researches, Vol. 11. pp. 175-76) :—"They (the Assamese) are a base and unprincipled nation, who have no fixed religion. They follow no rule, but that of their own inclination...do not adopt any mode of worship practised either by the heathens or Muslims, nor do they concur with any of the known sects which prevail among mankind. Unlike the pagans of Hindustan, they do not reject victuals dressed by Muslims, and they abstain from no flesh except human." The *Fathiya* (JBORS, Vol. I. p.190) speaks in the same strain. Of the contemporary Ahom king, it says :— "Although he is attached to Hindu religion...he does not bow his head down in worship to any idol." As to the people, it remarks :— " All the people of this country, not placing their necks in the yoke of any faith, eat whatever they get from the hand of any man (regardless of his caste) and partake of every kind of meat except human flesh."

‡ Gait (History of Assam, pp. 58–59, 121, 168-69) furnishes accounts of the persecution of Sankar Deb, and after his demise, that of his followers by the Ahom kings, Pratap Singh (1603-41) and Gadadhar Singh (1681-96).

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the Vaishnavas in Assam. But the new religion had gradually taken such a firm hold on the common people—that of the plains, that it was not to be easily throttled. By the end of the 17th century, Rudra Singh, the son and successor of Gadadhar Singh, appears to have accepted the logic of facts, reversed the persecuting policy of his father, and bestowed great favour on the Vaishnavas.

Thus in the religious and cultural life of the Ahoms, a two-fold conflict is discernible. On the one hand is the struggle between the old tribal religion and customs against the rising tide of Hinduism in general, and on the other hand is the clash in religious belief and practices of the ruling aristocracy, who were inclined towards Saktaism, with the common people, whose proclivities were Vaishnavite. This dual antagonism greatly affected the course of Ahom history, as we shall examine later on.

Manners, customs and social condition of the Koches and Ahoms.

While very little is known regarding the manners, customs and social life of the contemporary Koches, a lot of information in case of the Ahoms has come down to us mainly from the pen of the Persian chroniclers. The reason for this divergence in information is not probably far to seek. The Koches in Koch Bihar and Kamrup, having long been connected politically and culturally with the people of Muslim Bengal, their manners and customs were so akin to those of the latter as to obviate the necessity for special remarks.

Peculiarities of Ahom social life, noted by the observant Muslim chroniclers, smack of primitive culture. The paucity of clothing of the Ahoms, their great fondness for taking betel-leaves with green nuts, their abhorrence of oil (rather *ghee*), their practice of shaving hairs, beards and moustaches, and their form of adoration by kneeling down excite the astonishment of the cultured Mughals. The elaborate burial customs of the rich and the poor alike, so closely resembling the practices of the ancient Egyptians also strike

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them as novel. One of the common attributes, ascribed to the Koches and the Ahoms, is their skill in magic and incantation. The various rituals, observances and *mantras* of Tantrikism, so widely prevalent in the land, seem to have impressed the Muslims as something extraordinary, and they regarded them only as practices in witchery and magic. Polygamy appears to have been in vogue in Ahom society of this age. A noteworthy thing therein is, however, the great freedom of movement of the women folk, and their active life and habits.

Another peculiar feature was the feudal organisation of the Ahom society. At the apex was a ruling aristocracy consisting of the king and the descendants of the original noble families, who accompanied the traditional Ahom conqueror from his mountain-home across the Patkoi range. These are the so-called "genuine Assamese," whose number at the time of Mir Jumla's invasion is computed by his *waqia-navis* at not more than 20,000. They furnished the chief officers of the state—the Gohains, Baruas, Phukans, and each of them had a band of personal followers at his beck and call whose number varied according to his own status. The middle stratum of the society was filled up by men of the plains, who formed the majority of the population. They were the Assamese proper, "with many Bengali affinities, defective in physical strength, endurance and martial spirit."* At the base were a vast body of slaves, some being Mongoloid serfs, but most of them Bengali prisoners of war, Hindus and Muslims. They were a discontented set of people, comparable to the Helots of ancient Sparta—politically dangerous and socially degraded.

The deep cleavage in society and its ill-proportioned ranks appear ultimately to have reacted adversely on the military and political efficiency of the Ahom state, though during the period under review, their baneful effects are not greatly perceptible.

* Cf. *Fathiya* (JBORS, Vol. 1, p. 192) :— "In all things the Kolitas are superior to the Assamese (Ahoms proper) ; but in performing difficult tasks and making a firm stand in battle, the opposite is the case."

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Economic position—agriculture, trade, industries etc., of the Koches.

Agriculture appears to have been, as it is now, the main occupation of the Koches. But there is evidence of a flourishing trade and industry as well. Ralph Fitch, the English tourist, who visited Koch Bihar in 1585, tells us of its silk and cotton industry, as well as of its trade-relations with distant China. Stephen Cacella, the Jesuit traveller, who went to the Koch capital in 1626-27, testifies to the plenty and prosperity there and to the busy trade which the people carried on with Patna, Rajmahal and Gaur. The Persian chroniclers of Aurangzib's reign too speak of the magnificence and opulence of Koch Bihar, the capital, and of the varied industrial pursuits of the people.

And of the Ahoms.

From the authors of the *Alamgirnamah* and the *Fathiya*, it appears that the people of Assam of their days were a highly industrious and skilful people, and enjoyed great economic prosperity. Agriculture was, of course, their mainstay, and the alluvial plains of the Brahmaputra valley smiled with green fields and fruit trees of various kinds. The great care and energy bestowed on agriculture is testified to by the *Fathiya*.* On account of the greater extent of plains in *Uttarkol*, it was better cultivated than *Dakhinkol*, and produced plenty of pepper and arecanuts.

The trade-activities of the people were also considerable. In normal times, busy trade was carried on with Mughal Kamrup, and Gauhati was the emporium of trade and industries; the articles of export were gold, musk, aloe wood, pepper, spikenard and silk cloth, and those imported were salt, saltpetre, sulphur etc. Roads for facilitating inland trade as well as for bettering the means of communication were made by

* *Fathiya* (JBORS, Vol. I. p. 185) says :—"In this country (Assam) they make the surface of fields and gardens so level that the eye cannot feel the least elevation or depression in it, up to the extreme horizon. The Dutch sailor Glanius (p. 162) speaks of Mathurapur (south-east of Ghargaon, the Ahom capital) as a place full of fruit trees and sowed with excellent rice."

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the Ahom kings, particularly by Pratap Singh. One such road is mentioned by the Persian chroniclers as having extended from Lakhugarh to Ghargaon.*

The industrial arts in which the Assamese seem to have acquired great excellence are silk-rearing, silk-weaving and various kinds of wood-work. Flowered silk, velvet, *tatband* and other kinds of silk-stuff were nicely woven, and very beautiful and neat trays, chests, thrones and chairs, all carved out of one piece of wood, were made. Fine lattice and relief work in wood was done. The author of the *Fathiya* was so much struck by the elegant and varied design and the high artistic skill of the delicate wood-carvings of the Ahom royal palace at Ghargaon that he declared them to be unique in the world.† Besides these fine wood-works, those of a rough and massive kind were also ably accomplished. Ahom war-boats, with ornamented and propped head and stern, were built of *chambal* wood, and the houses of rich and poor alike were made

* Foster (JASB, 1872, p. 39) gives the Ahoms high praise for their skill in road-making. He says :—"The Romans have the reputation of being the masters in the art of road-making, but their efforts seemed small when compared with the net-work of enormous *bunds* (made only of mud) intersecting this country (Assam) in all directions... ."

† Cf. *Fathiya* (JBORS, Vol. 1, p. 194) :—"Probably nowhere else in the whole world can wooden houses be built with such decoration and figure-carving as by the people of this country (Assam). The sides of the palace have been partitioned into wooden lattices of various designs carved into relief, and adorned both inside and outside with mirrors of polished brass so that when sun-beams fall on them, the eye is dazzled by the flashing back of light."

It is necessary in this connection to combat the view of Allen (Assam District Gazetteer, Vol. V, p. 46) that "the absence of all references to these wonders in the Ahom histories suggests, however, that the Muhammadans were anxious to magnify the power and majesty of the prince they had subdued." Allen appears to have misunderstood the nature of the Ahom works which are hardly "histories" in the real sense of the term, but bare chronicles of fact, and do not, as a rule, give any account of the social, economic and other aspects of popular life. There seems no reason to disbelieve the Muhammadan writers here as their general narrative is, in the main, corroborated by the *Buranjis*.

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of wood as well as bamboo and straw.* This seems to have been due to the paucity of brick and stone and the frequency of earthquakes in Assam. The refined beauty of the houses of Ahom nobles at Ghargaon excited the admiration of the Muslims. Other industries in which the native Assamese excelled, are gold-gathering from the sands of the Brahmaputra (which employed 10 to 12 thousand men in Mughal times)† and casting of matchlocks, cannon and the preparation of gun-powder.‡

The most striking features in the economy of the Ahom state were the system of enforced labour and the non-imposition of any land-tax on the people. In every house, we are told, one, out of three, had to render service to the Raja. This system was obviously unpopular, though it contributed to the military resources of the state and facilitated the undertaking of great works of public utility, such as, roads, tanks, embankments etc. The absence of land-taxation must have been a welcome relief to the common people. The distribution of land in the Ahom state was made on a feudal basis. The king was in theory owner of all land, which he distributed amongst the officers of state, on a graduated scale, according to their rank and status. Land was cultivated generally by slave-labour.

The monetary system was peculiar. Conch shells (*kauri*), besides gold and silver coins, were current, but copper tokens were unknown. The general practice in Koch Bihar and in the Ahom kingdom appears to have been the issue of coinage only on the occasion of the accession of a new king to the throne ; hence the limited number of Koch and Ahom coinage. The monetary and material strength of the Ahom king was abundant, and it was well utilised in times of war.

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* *Fathiya* (JBORS, Vol. I. p. 192).

† *Ibid*, p. 187.

‡ *Ibid*, p, 192. We are told, "they (Assamese) cast excellent matchlocks and *bachadar* artillery, and show great skill in this craft. They make first-rate gun powder... ."

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Absolute monarchies may be said to have prevailed in all the north-east frontier states with which the Mughal Empire had to deal. While those in Koch Bihar and Kamrup were of the general type, the government in Assam was of a peculiar character, in which monarchical and feudal elements appear to have been curiously blended. Moreover, a distinct difference in the theory and practice of the Ahom government may be traceable. In theory, the Ahom State appears to have been a limited monarchy, in which the autocratic power of the sovereign was fettered by the three great councillors of state—the Gohains, whose office was hereditary. Their concurrence was necessary for the validity of the king's succession to the throne. With them the Ahom king was expected to consult on all governmental affairs, and it was only with their approval that he was to issue any orders or enter into any negotiation with foreign powers. But in practice, these constitutional safeguards seem to have been frequently ignored, and a despotism of a very harsh and cruel type prevailed. Though the offices of the councillors were in the hereditary possession of three great families, the king was allowed the liberty of appointing to them any member of these families he thought fit, and was also privileged to dismiss him when necessary. So there was hardly any real and effective check on the arbitrary and capricious tendencies of the king, and the Ahom and Assamese *Buranjis* contain many examples of his whims and tyranny.* Of course, "the extent to which the rules of the constitution were observed varied with the personal influence and character of the king, on the one side, and of the great nobles on the other."

Political institutions in Koch and Ahom states.

The feudal element in the Ahom constitution is clearly perceptible in the details of governmental organisation. The king was, of course, the head of the administration, but he

* For typical cases see Assam District Gazetteer, Vol. V, pp. 43–44. The *Fathiya* (JBORS, Vol. 1. pp. 187, 190) hints at the despotism prevalent in Assam and also refers specifically to the whims and savage cruelty of the reigning sovereign, Jayadhvaj Singh.

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appears to have taken no very active part in running it. It might almost be said of him that he reigned but did not govern. The actual government of the country was in the the hands of a feudal hierarchy, with the three great councillors of state (the Gohains), and the Bar Barua and Bar Phukan at the top, the other Gohains, Phukans, and Baruas in the middle, and the petty commanders of *paiks* at the bottom.

To understand the working of the governmental machinery, it is neccssary to possess a thorough knowledge of its basic element—the *paiks*. Excepting the nobles, the whole male population in the Ahom state was liable to render service to it. These people were known as *paiks*, three or four of whom constituted one full unit, termed a *got*, and had to serve in rotation. They were usually divided into clans or squads called *khels* or *mels*, under a regular gradation of officers, from commanders of twenty to six thousand. For the maintenance of the *paiks*, rent-free lands were given, and the various officers of state had a certain number of *paiks* assigned to them in lieu of pay, the number varying according to their rank and position. This meant, on the one hand, that the officers concerned exercised full jurisdiction and authority not only over the *paiks* but also over their lands, and, on the other hand, that the control so exercised was really effective only with regard to their immediate subordinates, and hardly reached the inferior ranks or the *paiks* under them. Thus arose a hierarchy of officials, with a gradually expanding territorial and administrative jurisdiction.

In the first rung of the official ladder were the three Gohains—the Burha Gohain, the Bar Gohain and the Bar Patra Gohain. They had full executive and judicial authority over their respective areas from which there was no appeal even to the king. According to David Scot, "the Gohains had allotted for their own use 10,000 *paiks*", over whom they exercised practically unfettered control." Next in rank to the Gohains was the Bar Barua or the "chief secretary." To him the whole executive power, civil and military, of the region outside the jurisdiction of the three Gohains was entrusted, and he often

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conducted foreign affairs as well, on behalf of the king. "He had control over 14,000 *paiks*, but they were also bound to render service to the king." The rank of the Bar Phukan was considered as next to that of the Bar Barua, and he was selected from the same four families that were entitled to hold that office. He at first governed as viceroy of the tract between the Kalang and the Brahmaputra, but with the expansion of the Ahom dominion his charge extended up to Goalpara, and Gauhati became his headquarters. He had important diplomatic functions, and carried on negotiations with foreign powers, specially the Mughal government.

A host of other officers, great and small—Gohains, Baruas and Phukans, also existed. Some of them held charge of small provincial areas of strategic importance (e. g., the Sadiya Khowa Gohain, the Morangi Khowa Gohain, the Kajali Mukhia Gohain) while some (e. g., twelve Phukans, in groups of six each) formed advisory committees to the Bar Barua and the Bar Phukan. The Baruas, who were subordinate in rank to the Phukans, held charge of minor departments of state on the civil side—mint, transport, royal kitchen etc. But some of the Baruas were entrusted with important military functions as well. There were twelve Rajkhowas, all subordinate to the Bar Barua, who performed important civil duties, such as, arbitration, superintendence of public work etc. According to the Persian chronicles, the Rajkhowas performed military functions also. Besides these, there were officers called Katakis (diplomatic agents), Kakatis (letter-writers) and the Dalais (expounders of the Ahom Shastras and augurs of the government). A number of semi-independent feudatory chiefs of the hills as well as of the plains also flourished, who were assessed to furnish a certain number of *paiks* to the Ahom king.

A word or two with regard to the Ahom administration of justice may here be deemed necessary. Judicial authority seems to have been an adjunct to executive functions, and the Gohains, the Bar Barua and the Bar Phukan exercised it over their own areas, with appeals to the king (excepting in case of

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the three chief Gohains). Justice of a rough and ready sort seems to have been imparted, severity and retaliation being the two main principles governing the Ahom penal code.

No review of the Ahom governmental system may be regarded as complete without a comment on the spirit underlying it. The Ahoms were originally a fierce and independent race, who lived for a long time in the land of their adoption as an army of occupation, and had to wage almost incessant war fare against their hardy hill-neighbours on the north, the south and the east. Hence it is but natural that the development of Ahom polity should be along military lines, and military spirit seems to have pervaded the entire system of Ahom administration. As in the Mughal Empire, so also in the Ahom state, officials were graded on a military basis, as commanders of so many *paiks* (the lowest military unit). Though purely military officers in charge of various branches of the army and the navy existed, e. g., the Hati Barua, Ghora Barua, Naosaliya Phukan, Khargharia Phukan, no hard and fast line of distinction seems to have been drawn between them and the purely civil functionaries, so that we very often find the Burha Gohain, Bar Gohain, Bar Barua, Bar Phukan and others leading armies in battle.* This intermixture between two different sorts of functions, one of which required special training and technical skill, not only led to maladministration but was greatly detrimental to the military efficiency of the state.

Two markedly weak points in the Ahom polity were the exclusion of the common people from all important offices of state, and the absence of a community of interests between the rulers and the ruled. The few ancient Ahom families monopolised all governmental posts, and the non-Ahoms and long-domiciled foreigners could only get jobs not involving military service, which, however, seem to have been very few in number.

The military organisation of the Koches and the Ahoms—the two dominant powers of the north-east frontier region, is

* The Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis* as well as the Persian works contain numerous examples of this amalgamated system.

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practically a virgin field of study. Not to speak of the Koch annals and the Ahom and Assamese *Buranjis*, modern works such as those compiled by Wade, B. Hamilton, Robinson, Allen, and Gait as well, observe almost complete silence on the point. Yet in its thorough exposition lies the secret of the ultimate failure of Mughal foreign policy in that quarter.

Military organisation

Fortunately side-lights on this important topic have been thrown not only by the contemporary Persian chronicles (*Baharistan*, *Padishahnamah*, *Alamgirnamah*, *Fathiya*, etc.,) and the *Buranjis* but occasionally by the accounts of the contemporary Europeans as well (Ralph Fitch and Glanius). Though no great details regarding the military system of the Koches are forthcoming, the materials extant suffice to indicate that the Koch and Ahom systems were, in some important respects at least, analogous so that a thorough treatment of the latter would give some idea with regard to the former.*

Of the Koches

Ahom military institutions may be studied under two broad divisions—the army and the navy. The former again may be subdivided into various branches. First comes the infantry. It was the bed-rock of the Ahom army organisation, the *paiks* already mentioned being the basic unit. Twenty *paiks* were commanded by a *Bora*, one hundred by a *Saikia*, one thousand by a *Hazarika*, three thousand by a *Rajkhowa*, and six

And of the Ahoms

* One or two instances may be given. The Koch method of fortification by means of mud, bamboo and wood and of making palisade of double-edged bamboo or cane pieces, mentioned by Ralph Fitch and Mirza Nathan as prevalent in the days of Kings Nara Narayan and Lakshmi Narayan respectively, is referred to by the Persian chroniclers of Mir Jumla's time as existing in Assam as well. Again, the martial tactics and the main weapons of war appear to have been the same in Koch and Ahom realms. The standard Persian works mention the use of swords, matchlocks, bows and arrows (particularly the poison-tipped ones) and the art of making daring night-attacks with elephants in front, as common to Koch Bihar, Kamrup and Assam kingdoms.

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thousand by a Phukan. At the head of all was the commander-in-chief, generally known as the Neog Phukan.

The weapons used by the foot-soldiers were swords, half-swords, spears, bamboo-bows and arrows with or without iron heads, and cross-bow arrows. The great technical skill and general excellence of the Ahom infantry is almost unanimously testified to by the Persian chroniclers.* The *Fathiya* and the *Alamgirnamah* go so far as to say that one of them was more than a match for 10 Muslim soldiers. As the main strength of the Ahoms lay in the infantry, their number was very great and once at least came up to 100,000.† Strong as the Ahoms were in their infantry, there seems to have been no cavalry worth the name.‡ Conditions of fighting in the Assam valley afforded little scope for the development of this unit of war. And in this respect, the Ahoms were at such a disadvantage, when compared with the almost invincible Mughal troopers, that one of them is alleged to have been sufficient for dispersing 100 Ahom *paiks*. In Assam there were no horses, and *tangan* and other breeds had to be imported from the Bhutan Hills. An officer, called the Ghora Barua, was in charge of the small cavalry that used to be sent to war.

Elephants seem to have been a very important unit of war in Assam. The hills and wilds abounded in them, and the "mountain-like ferocious-looking elephants" were the terror of the Mughal soldiery. In a land of muds, quagmires, *nalahs*, hills and forests, elephants were indispensable not only for land-fight and storming of forts, but also for purposes of transport and making roads and pathways for the infantry and gunners. Their number appears to have been considerable, though it varied from time to time.¶

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* Cf. *Fathiya* (MS. p. 65) :—"A very small number of their soldiers often checkmate thousands in battle."

† *Padishanamah*, Vol II, p. 69.

‡ *Ibid*—"The (Assamese) army consists only of foot-soldiers."

¶ In connection with the Ahom-Mughal war of 1636-38, the *Padishahnamah* mentions 1000 elephants as belonging to the Ahom king.

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The officer in charge of the war-elephants was named the Hati Barua, and held an exalted place in the military hierarchy.

The use of fire-arms in Assam is believed to have been introduced early in the 16th century, and it came in the wake of the first great hostile contact with Muslim Bengal. The Ahoms soon picked up the art of making various kinds of guns, big and small, hand-grenades (matchlocks), "light field pieces" (*Ramchangis*) and big cannon, and also of munition, materials for the latter having been imported from Mughal dominion. An officer, styled as the Khargharia Phukan, superintended the manufacture of gun-powder.

The second great division of the Ahom military department was the navy. It appears to have been the one indispensable weapon of defence as well as of offence in a country like Assam, which is intersected by numerous rivers and interspersed with thick jungles and hills. Moreover, there was no dearth of material for the creation of a strong navy in Assam. The forests had abundance of hard wood, particularly *chambal*, with which the war-boats were made, while the common people, born and bred up in a riparian plain, were naturally adepts in the art of plying boats. Their skill and bravery are highly spoken of by the author of the *Padishah-namah*. The war-boats were commonly termed *bacharis*, and their shape and design were peculiar. The head and the base consisted of one levelled plank (only the marrow of the timber being used), while the poop was extremely high, and was carved with ugly awe-inspiring faces. Their armament consisted of small pieces, swivel guns, and petrachos of bronze of which the muzzles were fashioned into shapes of various animals—tigers, lions, dogs, elephants and crocodiles.* Each boat appears to have accommodated 60 to 80 sailors. The Ahom war-boats stood for durability and strength. As they were mounted with big guns, they were necessarily very heavy and unfit for swift manœuvring, and, in this respect, compared unfavourably with

* Cf. Manucci (*Storia do Mogor*, Vol. 11, p. 100).

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the light-bodied and light-armed Mughal *kosahs*, which could move with the speed of "lightning and wind." The number of these war-boats is a thing of vague conjecture, for nowhere do we come across any probable figure.* It seems however reasonable to suggest that the Ahom ships exceeded more than 1000 at the time of Mir Jumla's campaign, and so were probably more than three times his naval strength. No details are available regarding the personnel of this large fleet, the names of one or two of the officers being only known. The Naubaicha Phukan had an allotment of 1000 men for manning the royal boats, while the Nausalia Phukan was allowed a thousand men for building and repairing the same.

For purposes of military defence, a large number of forts were made at strategic places in the Ahom kingdom. In fact, these strongholds furnished the nerves and sinews of the Ahom state. They were to be found in *Uttarkol* as well as in *Dakhinkol*, but were more numerous in the latter region. Some of the more important forts in *Uttarkol* were (beginning from the east) at Samdhara, and Singri, and during the periodic conquest of Mughal Kamrup, Gauhati, Jogighopa, and the confluence of the Sankosh with the Brahmaputra were also fortified. In *Dakhinkol*, beginning from Lakhugarh westward, Kaliabar, Simlagarh, Kajali and Pandu were all fortified stations.

Interesting details regarding the building of these forts are given by the contemporary Persian writers. They were generally made of mud, bamboo and wood, and sometimes grass was also used. Bricks were not available, and the absence of this more durable material explains to a great extent the almost total disappearance of even the relics of these forts. Great care was taken in their construction. Around the main stronghold, a strong wooden wall was made, whose high turrets were mounted with powerful guns. Surrounding the fort

* The *Fathiya* (MS. p. 64) seems to put an incredibly high figure—exceeding more than 16,000.

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wall all through, ran a deep ditch, whose skirts were invariably set with a thick bamboo palisade—a pitfall for the cavalry. Sometimes this palisade was encircled by a second ditch. The fort-making complete, it was garrisoned adequately, and a powerful contingent of warboats was deputed to safeguard it.

Though the mode of warfare of the Ahoms has been branded as "unscientific," a close study offers good reasons for a somewhat different verdict. The Ahoms as well as the Koches were adepts in night attacks. The most typical form of advance towards the enemy was under cover of small stockades, with the elephants in front, the main aim being to overwhelm them by their great numerical strength. As far as practicable, the army moved in close co-operation with the fleet. With regard to the siege-strategy, the Ahoms aimed mainly at the cutting of all ingress and egress from the enemy fort and starving the garrison to surrender. In the absence of elaborate siege-trains and engineers, the elephants were used for making breaches in the fort wall, along which the infantry were to pour into the fort.

Ahom military tactics.

In naval encounters, the Ahoms had to depend for success on the massiveness and strength of their war-boats and the skill of the artillery accommodated in them, rather than on nautical excellence. The immobility of the *bacharis* made fighting at close quarters pretty risky, and a great space was necessary for the boats to move about.

And naval strategy.

A comparison of the merits and defects of the Ahom military organisation is an interesting study. The prevalence of military conscription was a great vantage-point of the Ahom state, and we are told that "in times of war, all the inhabitants of the kingdom,—artisans, farmers, the well-to-do and common people, free and unfree, have to go to battle whether they wish it or not." Besides this overwhelming numerical strength, the bodily vigour, courage and hardihood of the Ahom *paiks* were valuable military assets. But the defects of the Ahom

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military system were many, and they seem to have outweighed its merits. The people of the plains, who formed by far the majority of the soldiery, were a discontented and cowardly set who, it is alleged "either fight and are defeated or flee without fighting." Again, the Assamese were naturally afraid of horses, and whenever their chief antagonist—the Mughals, appeared with the cavalry, they fled almost at the sight of them. Other weak points appear to have been the combination of civil and military functions in one hand, and the defective structure and strategy of the Ahom navy. The last, but not the least, weak point was the insubordination, rivalry and jealousy of the Ahom officers, feudally organised.

Of all the forces that shaped the destinies of the north-east frontier people, geography holds perhaps the most prominent place. Its influence may be traced more or less in all spheres of their national life—upon their character as well as their political, military, economic and cultural position.

While the people of Koch Bihar and Kamrup were, by virtue of their geographical position, plainsmen with traits common to those of the neighbouring country of Bengal, the Ahoms were a mountaineering tribe, who, in their new habitat, found themselves shut in between inaccessible hilly barriers on three sides and practically separated from the rest of the world "like the word *alif*." The forests, marshes and *nalahs* with which the greater part of the plains was spotted, and the abnormal rainfall prevalent there, made intercourse even amongst the Ahoms themselves well-nigh difficult. The effect seems to have been the development of a grave and sombre type of people, with their primitive ferocious traits and rough manners still unimproved. Truly does the *Fathiya* (MS. p. 54) speak of Assam :—"Its plains, being girt round by hills, tend to breed melancholy and fear."

Influence of geography upon Koch and Ahom characters.

It was, however, on the development of political life of the north-east frontier people that geography exercised the most

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potent influence. The Koch region, lying to the west of the Brahmaputra valley and east of the Karatoya, is a well-watered plain and as such, has, since ancient times, been again and again the seat of compact political government. Again, the fact that it is merely a continuation of Bengal and merges itself into it in the south and west, and particularly in the south-east and south-west, has made the growth of political connections between the two almost inevitable. Further, it has been mainly through the Koch realm that intercourse with the Assam valley has, in all ages, been found possible. In other words, it has always held the key to the north-east frontier of India.

Influence of geography upon the political history of Koch Bihar.

These facts appear to have affected the course of Koch political history in a two-fold manner. While, on the one hand, they made the Koch region the natural basis of attack of the Medieval Bengal Sultans upon the Ahom realm, they, on the other hand, secured later on for the Koch government a more favourable treatment from the Mughal Emperors. Eager to extend the bounds of their domain across north-eastern India, the Mughal sovereigns thought it expedient to keep up good relations with the Koch power which commanded the gate-way. So it was that while Kamrup was conquered, and Assam raided more than once, Koch Bihar was for a long time let off only with the imposition of political supremacy.

In the case of the people of Assam as well, geography played an important part. The peculiar physical configuration of the land—its inordinate length and short breadth, the prevalence of hills, large and small, all crowned with dense forests, as well as the existence of swamps, marshes and *nalahs* (particularly in the lower region) made Assam, generally speaking, unfit to be the nucleus of a strong and centralised political government. The only possible site available being a small area in the upper part of the Assam valley, covered mostly by the modern Sibsagar and partly by the Lakshmipur

And of Assam.

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District, it became the cradle of the Ahom monarchy. Again, the encasement of the plains of Assam by long and high mountain ranges, inhabited by hostile tribes still in their primitive barbarity and strength, affected greatly the political solidarity of the Ahom state. Much of its energy was sapped by continuous warfare against them, but still these were far from thoroughly subdued. In times of foreign invasion, they often offered assistance to the enemy and thus proved to be a standing menace to the peace and integrity of the realm.*

With regard to a very interesting and eventful phase of Ahom political history, viz., the origin and growth of the conflict with the Muslims, particularly the Mughals—our chief concern, the influence of geography cannot be overestimated. While, on the one hand, the geographical isolation of Assam from the seat of Muslim power in Bengal delayed the beginning of an intercourse with it, the rich fauna and flora of the country, on the other hand, together with its contiguity to Kamrup—a sort of half-way house between Assam and Bengal, gave the contact, when it occurred, a bitterly hostile turn. As the inheritors of the policy initiated by the Medieval Sultans of Bengal, the Mughals were, from the beginning, inimically disposed towards Assam, and when the logic of circumstances made them the master of Kamrup, almost the self-same geographical factors worked with greater weight in resuscitating the traditional conflict with the Ahoms, and also in prolonging its lease of life.

Not to speak of the origin, the course and duration of the Ahom-Mughal contest as well as its ultimate issue were greatly determined by the physical features of the Brahmaputra valley (which was the venue). To go into details—the route of march, the plan of operations, the tactics employed by the combatants, and even the nature and number of engagements

* Cf. Glanius, p. 165:—"There came likewise to our camp (the Mughal camp to which the Dutch sailor was attached during Mir Jumla's Assam war) ambassadors from the king of the Anthropophages or Man-eaters (Nagas) offering the assistance of his army against the king of Assam's subjects..... ."

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bear unmistakable evidence of geographical influence. Let us elucidate our point still further. From the physical configuration of Assam it is abundantly clear that the route of an invading army from Bengal must lie along the Brahmaputra valley, and the most effective and essential instrument of war would be the navy. The banks of the Brahmaputra, particularly in Lower Assam, being either skirted by hillocks, crowned with forests, or overgrown with wild reeds and thick grass, the land-army must proceed slowly and cautiously along them, in close co-operation with the fleet. Next, the necessity for securing the line of communication and food supply would demand the capture of the numerous fortified stations established by the natives at strategic points both in *Uttarkol* and in *Dakhinkol*, as well as their garrisoning (by the invaders). Control over the Brahmaputra—the great highway of aggression as well of defence, being the crux of the whole situation, naval battles would be decisive factors, and land-fighting and siege-operations merely subsidiary issues.

So far with regard to the course of the war. Its duration and ultimate issue would also be largely conditioned by geographical factors. The advance of the invaders being necessarily slow, tedious and difficult, and the number of strategic points to be gained being numerous, the short favourable time (i. e., the few winter months) for campaigning would soon pass away. Then the abnormal rains, so peculiar to the land, would begin, bringing with them fresh and more serious difficulties—those of locomotion, food supply, maintenance of posts gained and of communication with the fleet, as well as those arising out of violent diseases, particularly malignant fevers and severe dysentery, caused by the damp and moist air and putrid water of the flooded streams. In short, success of an invasion from outside would ultimately depend upon the destruction of the naval strength of the Ahoms, as well as the completion of the return journey from Assam before the advent of the rains.

But this was always found to be impracticable. The Ahoms, on their part, would naturally take advantage of the almost

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insurmountable difficulties presented by the peculiar geography of the land. Sure of nature's aid, their plan of operation would be simpler. They would bide their time and always avoid open fight, particularly on water, and at the same time would try to hold out in their fortified posts. If they failed, they would not despair but adopt a new policy of guerilla warfare and try to cut off the rear and food supply of the invaders. In this way the rains would come on, and the Ahoms would then be in their own element. Well-concerted attacks on the miserable invaders, sore beset with rain, flood and disease, would follow, and either they would be gradually exterminated or starved to death. Thus, owing to the operation of unchanging geographical factors, the numerous campaigns led into Assam from Medieval times—from the days of Alau-d din Husain Shah onwards, partake more or less of the same nature. So there is an inevitably dull and monotonous air about them, as has already been suggested.

A typical example of the influence of geographical elements upon the military resources of a state is furnished by Koch Bihar. The absence of any great natural barrier, such as, hills and broad and deep rivers (excepting the Karatoya) and the comparative scantiness of dense jungles and marshy regions made Koch Bihar an easy victim to foreign foes. The general dearth of elephants and the absence of a strong navy also rendered the Koch military position weak, as is well illustrated in the case of Mir Jumla's conquest.

Influence of geography upon the military position of the Koches.

The presence of strong natural obstacles, on the other hand, strengthened the defences of the Ahom state. Its military equipment was also conditioned by its physical features. In a land of hills, morasses and *nalahs*, cavalry was practically useless, and so it did not flourish in Assam as a unit of war. The dense wilds there harboured strong and ferocious elephants and at the same time supplied excellent materials for war-boats, and upon them both the Ahoms depended a

And of the Ahoms.

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good deal for their military success. Again, the sharp contrast in physical strength and endurance between the Ahoms and the plainsmen of the Assam valley, which affected the military strength of the country, seems also to have been mainly due to their habitation in different geographical zones.

Geography determined the nature and quality of agricultural and other economic products as well as the trade and commercial resources of the Koch and the Ahom realms. The difference in time and degree of the Hinduization and cultural regeneration of the Koches and the Ahoms should also be greatly attributable to geographical issues, while the cultural distinction noticeable in the higher and lower strata of the population in Assam, appears only natural as between the semi-civilised immigrants from hilly regions outside and the more civilised population of the plains, greatly enlightened by their contact with Bengal.

As well as upon their economic, religious and cultural life.

In addition to geography, ethnic, religious, cultural and economic forces as well played their part in shaping the history of the north-east frontier tract in general, and that of our period in particular. In spite of the early establishment of social and economic relations between the Koches and the Ahoms, their mutually hostile attitude, almost throughout our period, seems attributable not only to the natural political rivalry but also to the difference in time and degree of their ethnic, religious and cultural transformation. The original Mongoloid Koches, by frequent intermarriages with the Dravidian races in their neighbourhood, became a mixed people in whom the Mongolian element gradually diminished so that they found themselves ethnically akin to the people of North Bengal. On the other hand, the Ahoms kept up the own ethnical entity quite unmixed for a long time, with the result that as time went on, the divergence in racial traits between the two became more and more pronounced.

Influence of ethnic, religious, cultural and economic forces on the history of the north-east frontier kingdoms.

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Again, the Koches were Hinduized and civilised much earlier and to a greater extent than the Ahoms. Even as late as the end of the 17th century, the latter maintained their distinctive religious system as well as their meat-eating and wine-drinking habits along with the predilections for the Brahmanical faith. Even in their adoption of Hinduism, they differed from the Koches. While Vaishnavism gradually gained ground over the latter, the Ahoms, at least their higher ranks, remained predominantly Saktas for a long time. Thus, in spite of their origin from one common stock, the Koches and the Ahoms became in course of time widely separated from one another and this gave rise to mutual conflict, usual in the case of people with quite different racial and cultural affinities. Similar differences in these elements between the Ahoms and their backward neighbours—the hill tribes of the north, east, and south, as well as their more civilised subject people—the Kolitas, seem to have engendered trouble both within and without the Ahom state, and weakened its cause in peace and war.

In the history of the Koch-Mughal and Ahom-Mughal relations of our period, there is one striking fact. It is the easier and quicker political degeneration of the Koches than of the Ahoms. Here again ethnic and cultural factors made their influence felt. While the Koches became easily and rapidly Hinduized, and adopted the humanistic and peaceful tenets of the Vaishnavas to the neglect of Saktaism, the Ahoms long resisted the process of Hinduization, and even when they submitted to it, they accepted a creed quite in keeping with their martial instincts and also fully conducive to the maintenance of their primitive vigour and hardihood. Strong in their tribal unity, fierce in their independence, invigorated by a nourishing diet and buoyed up by an exhilarating drink, the Ahoms, in spite of the many defects in their political and military systems, ultimately got the better of the Mughals, still in the hey-day of their prosperity and glory.

So far for the ethnic, religious and cultural forces and their bearing on the history of our period. As regards economic

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factors, it may be pointed out that while the comparative poverty of the Koch region served as a deterrent to invasion from outside, the abundant resources, natural as well created, of the Ahom realm seem to have affected the course of its history in a two-fold manner. On the one hand, these excited the cupidity of the Mughals and offered an ever-increasing incentive to their military zeal, and, on the other hand, they enabled the Ahoms to fight with their numerous foes within and without, with a well-filled treasury and strong military and naval array.

Section II. Early History.

In ancient times the territories comprising modern Koch Bihar, Kamrup, and a large tract of Assam formed part of a great kingdom of Kamarupa,* which is frequently mentioned in the *Mahabharata* and in Pauranik and Tantrik literature. Very little is known of its early history. As regards its geographical extent, it varied from time to time. According to the *Mahabharata*, Pragjyotisha stretched southwards as far as the Bay of Bengal, and its western boundary was the Karatoya. The *Kalika Purana*† refers to the temple of Kamakhya, near Gauhati, as being situated in the centre of Kamarupa, and the *Vishnu Purana*‡ adds that the country extended around the temple for 100 *yojanas* in all directions. In the *Yogini Tantra*, Kamarupa is said to have extended from the Karatoya river on the west to the Dikrai on the east and from the mountain of Kanjagiri on the north to the confluence of the Brahmaputra and the Lakhya rivers on the south, so that it included roughly almost the

Kamarupa of the Epic, Pauranik, and the Tantrik age.

* I have retained the Sanskrit spelling (Kamarupa) throughout the second chapter in order to distinguish the ancient kingdom from its off-shoot of the same name (Kamrup), established by Raghu Deb during the last quarter of the sixteenth century.

† *Kalika Purana*, Bangabashi Press edition, p. 91.

‡ *Vishnu Purana*, Bangabashi Press edition, p. 81.

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whole region of the Brahmaputra valley, besides Rangpur, Bhutan, Koch Bihar, the north-eastern part of Mymensingh, and possibly also the Garo Hills.

Kamarupa of Hiuen Tsiang's time.

The earliest authentic account of ancient Kamarupa is derived from the writings of the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsiang, who visited it from Bengal about 640 A. D. A strong monarchy was then flourishing there under a Hindu named Bhaskara Varman, who was a feudatory of King Harsha Vardhana of Kanauj. Hiuen Tsiang places the circumference of the country of Kamarupa at 10,000 *li* (nearly 1700 miles), from which General Cunningham* infers that it must, at that time, have comprised the whole of the Brahmaputra valley as well as Koch Bihar and Bhutan.

After Hiuen Tsiang's visit, darkness again envelops the history of the country up to the end of the twelfth century, and a few copper-plate inscriptions, besides the rock inscription of Tezpur, are all we have to build on.†

Tho period of Mlechha and Pala supremacy.

Not many years after Hiuen Tsiang's visit, the dynasty of Bhaskara Varman appears to have been overthrown by a line of Mlechha kings, whose first scion was one Sala Stambha. The next line, mentioned in the copper-plate grants, was founded by Pralambha, about the year 800 A. D. It has left three relics in the shape of the Tezpur rock inscription and the Tezpur and Nowgong copper-plates, and its most famous rulers were Harjjara, Vana Mala, and Bala Varman. The new dynasty held sway for about two hundred years, and it then gave way to the Palas (about 1000 A. D.). Ratna Pala was the most noted sovereign of this line. Records of his land-grants have been found at Bargaon and Sualkuchi, while a similar relic of his grandson, Indra Pala, has been discovered at Gauhati.

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* Ancient Geography of India, Vol. 1, Buddhist period, p. 500.

† For details see Gait's History of Assam, pp. 22-23.

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The fall of the Pala power ushers in a dark period in Kamarupa history. When light again dawns about a century and a half later, we find the kings of Pragjyotisha feudatory to the Bengal line of Pala kings, who had driven back the Senas and regained their former position as the paramount power in North Bengal.

Beginnings of Muslim contact with Kamarupa.

The advent of the Muhammadans in Bengal greatly affected the fortunes of the Kamarupa kingdom. It proved to be a ready target of their attack, and, as such, finds frequent mention in the Muslim chronicles. Minhaju-s Siraj in his *Tabakat-i-Nasiri** gives us some hints with regard to the political position and the territorial limits of Kamarupa at the beginning of the thirteenth century. It appears that the river "Bangamati", "Bagmati"† or "Bakmadi",‡ identified by Mr. Blochmann with the Karatoya, was the western boundary of a state of considerable power and extent, under a monarch styled as Kamesvar. There is nothing to show how far the kingdom extended to the east, and only a guess can be hazarded that it then comprised the territories covered by the modern Districts of Darrang and Nowgong.

Coincide with the appearance of the Ahoms in the Eastern Brahmaputra valley.

The appearance of the Ahoms in the eastern corner of the Brahmaputra valley, early in the thirteenth century, introduced a new element in Kamarupa history. The new-comers set a limit to the political pretensions as well as the territorial expansion of the kingdom of Kamarupa, which was soon restricted to the lower Brahmaputra valley. The upper Brahmaputra valley, which constitutes Assam proper, was henceforward the scene of activities of the Ahom kings.

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* Raverty's English translation, pp. 560, 594.

† Elliot's History of India, Vol. II, p. 310.

‡ *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, p. 152 ; English translation of the *Riyaz*, p. 65.

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The *Buranjis* of the Ahoms give us a glimpse of the internal condition of the Brahmaputra valley at the time of their immigration. It was divided into numerous small and independent principalities, at war with one another. A line of Chutiya kings was ruling the tract north of the river Brahmaputra and east of the Subansiri and the Disang, excepting a strip to the south and south-east, possessed by several petty Bodo tribes. Further west, there was a Kachari kingdom, south of the Brahmaputra, stretching probably half way across the Nowgong District. West of the Kacharis and the Chutiyas were the domains of a number of warring chiefs, called the Bhuiyas, covering both the banks of the river Brahmaputra. To the extreme west lay the realm of Kamarupa, whose eastern boundary varied with the variation in the strength of its hostile neighbours, the Bhuiyas.

Political condition of the Brahmaputra valley in the thirteenth century.

About the end of the thirteenth century a change came over the political destinies as well as the nomenclature of Kamarupa. There came into existence a new state which was known as Kamata, apparently after the name of its capital Kamatapur (a few miles to the south of Koch Bihar), comprising but a small portion of the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa. The term Kamarupa, shortened into Kamrup and Persianised into *Kamru*, seems to have been gradually applied to the region east of the river Manas and west of the Bar Nadi. It appears at times to have owed allegiance to the Kamata kings and often to other rulers. The earliest authoritative mention of *Kamru* as a separate place occurs in the coinage of Sikander Shah, the son and successor of the first great independent Bengal Sultan, Haji Ilyas Shah. Later on in Alau-d din Husain Shah's coins and inscriptions, *Kamta* and *Kamru* are clearly differentiated, and this is the case in Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari* as well.

Changes in nomenclature and history of Kamarupa in the fourteenth century.

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Early in the fifteenth century, Kamata history attains some sort of unity and authenticity under the Khen dynasty.

Advent of the Khens in the fifteenth century.

The Khens ruled for about seventy-five years, and their last representative, Nilambar, was overthrown and his kingdom destroyed by Sultan Alau-d din Husain Shah at about the end of the century.

The next important epoch in the history of the Kamarupa kingdom is the age of the Koch kings. Biswa Singh, the founder of the new line, established a powerful kingdom on the ruins of the Kamata state, with Koch Bihar as the capital, and indulged in a systematic warfare against the Ahoms for territorial expansion in the east. The reign of his son and successor, Nara Narayan, was the most glorious in the history of the Koch state. During the latter part of his rule, a division was made in the kingdom, with the river Sankosh as the boundary between the two parts. The origin of the dual seat of Koch royal power, the old one having Koch Bihar as the capital, and the new one (known generally as Kamrup) with its head-quarters at Barnagar, dates from this period.

Rise of the Koches in the sixteenth century and the division of their power.

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CHAPTER II.

PRE-MUGHAL MUSLIM RELATION WITH NORTH-EASTERN INDIA.

Section I. Muslim Relation with the Kingdom of Kamarupa.

From the brief review of the early history of the north-east frontier tract made in the previous chapter, it is clear that the extent and political influence of ancient Kamarupa varied considerably from time to time, and at the time of the advent of the Muhammadans in Bengal, early in the thirteenth century, Kamarupa included the region bounded by the river Karatoya on the west, stretching eastwards as far as the modern Districts of Darrang and Nowgong. The geographical proximity of Kamarupa to Muslim Bengal profoundly influenced its history. On the west as well as on the south, the Kamarupa kingdom was contiguous to Medieval Bengal, and the beginnings of Muhammadan supremacy there saw also the origin of a regular intercourse with Kamarupa.

Beginnings of Muslim contact with Kamarupa.

It is curious to note that the nature of the intercourse, from its very inception, was definitely hostile. Here again geography made its influence felt. Lying in the path of territorial expansion and the attainment of natural frontiers of Muslim Bengal on the north as well as on the east, the kingdom of Kamarupa was in itself a great baulk to the political ambition and military zeal of the Bengal Sultans, and, as such, was the natural target of their attack. Moreover, the exceedingly fertile soil of that riverain country, its small hillocks teeming with wild elephants and musk deer, its jungles abounding in aromatic shrubs, and, above all, its long continued existence under Hindu Rajas, whetted alike the material greed and the religious zeal of the early Muslim Sultans, and many a campaign was directed against it during their time.

Nature of the contact hostile : its reasons.

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Various Muslim invasions of Kamarupa.

In the following pages I propose to give a running summary of the various invasions led, with varying fortunes, by the Bengal Sultans upon Kamarupa, prior to the advent of the Mughals.

Muhammad Bakhtyar Khilji's northern expedition (*c.* 1206 A.D.)

The earliest Muslim contact with Kamarupa dates from the time of Muhammad Khilji, son of Bakhtyar. After a few years had passed since his overthrow of the last Sena king of Bengal, Muhammad Bakhtyar Khilji determined to invade Turkistan and Tibet (in the north), and got ready an army of 10,000 horse for the purpose.* He appears to have left his capital on the eve of the rains (*c.* 1206 A.D.), and, guided by a Mech chief who had been converted to Islam, he proceeded northward along the bank of the river Karatoya for ten days till a bridge-head was reached at the north-western border of Kamarupa, then under the rule of a powerful Hindu Raja. A mingled feeling of alarm and suspicion was roused in the mind of the Kamarupa king by the northerly advance of the Muhammadan conqueror, and he now attempted to dissuade the latter from undertaking his bold adventure on the ground of the lateness of the season and of the inadequacy of his equipment, but was unsuccessful. Muhammad Bakhtyar Khilji crossed the Karatoya by the bridge, continued his march through the defiles and passes of the northern mountain ranges for six days more, and at last reached the plains of Lower Tibet. A number of plundering raids were then made in the hilly country.

Though the advance of the Muhammadans was easy and rapid, and was attended with initial success, its upshot was calamitous in the extreme. The hardy mountaineers, roused into great fury by the pillaging excursions of the invaders, soon rose in arms, killed a large number of them and imprisoned many. At that juncture, the alarming news of a strong reinforcement to the ranks of the enemy reached Muhammad

* *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, English translation, pp. 560–72.

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Bakhtyar Khilji, and he was compelled to beat a hasty retreat with the shattered remnant of his weary troopers. Great difficulties, arising out of the rugged nature of the country as well as the hostilities of its people, dogged the footsteps of the retreating invaders. These reached their climax when they arrived at the frontier of the Kamarupa kingdom. The bridge over the Karatoya was pulled down and a serious attempt was made by the Kamarupa king to entrap the thinned and helpless Muslim army and destroy it altogether. A desperate attempt to cross the river in the face of tremendous opposition was crowned with success, and it was only through the friendly intervention of the Mech chief that Muhammad Bakhtyar Khilji could reach Deokot with a handful of men.

Thus the maiden attempt of Muhammadan Bengal at the expansion of its territories towards the north ended in a great disaster. A critical analysis of the sole contemporary account of this gloomy episode, left by Minhaj-us Siraj in the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, makes it clear that the Muhammadan conqueror did not enter the territory of Kamarupa at all but passed along its western frontier only.* Yet this attempt on his part was ominous, and the Kamarupa king was astute enough to realise the necessity of nipping it in the bud. He made a strong effort to cut off the Muhammadans altogether in their retreat, but was rewarded only with partial success.

Touched only the fringe of Kamarupa.

* It is necessary in this connection to refer to a rock inscription, discovered some years ago in the vicinity of the Kanaibarashi hill (about one mile from the north bank of the river Brahmaputra, near Gauhati) and deciphered by Mr. Padma Nath Bhattacharyya (*vide* Indian Historical Quarterly, December, 1927, p. 843). It is dated the 13th *Chaitra*, *Saka* 1127 (27th March, 1206 A.D. and it records the total destruction of the Muslims (*Turushka*) in Kamarupa. The place of discovery of this inscription, its date as well as its phraseology raise a natural presumption that the first Muslim host penetrated into the heart of Kamarupa and reached the vicinity of Gauhati, where they were thoroughly worsted. But, in view of the testimony of the contemporary Muslim Chronicler and the peculiar political condition of Bengal and the Brahmaputra valley of the early thirteenth century, the presumption appears rather untenable.

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Muhammad Bakhtyar Khilji's northern expedition had touched but the fringe of the Kamarupa kingdom. The first Bengal Sultan who actually invaded it was Ghiyasu-d din Iwaz-i-Husain the Khalj. About eight years after his assumption of independent status (624 A. H.-1226-27 A. D.), the Sultan launched an expedition into Kamarupa. Very little is known regarding its details. It appears that the invader could not make much headway and had to return hastily, leaving his task unfinished, on account of the sudden capture of his capital Lakhanawati by Nasiru-d din, son of the Delhi Emperor Shamsu-d din Altamsh (Iltutmish).*

Invasion of Kamarupa by Bengal Sultan Ghiyasu-d din Iwaz-i-Husain the Khalj (1226-27. A.D.)

As the political situation in Bengal was greatly influenced by the changes in the history of the Delhi Sultanate, thirty years

* *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, English translation, pp. 587-88 ; 594-5. A good deal of exaggeration has hitherto been current regarding this episode. While Gunabhiram Barua (Assam *Buranji*, p. 73) and, following him, Gait (History of Assam p. 37) tell us that the Muslim invader advanced along the Brahmaputra as far as Sadiya but was defeated in the end and driven back, Stewart (History of Bengal, p. 35) goes a step further and says that he compelled the Raja of Kamarupa to pay tribute. There is absolutely nothing in the only contemporary Persian account to support the story of the exaggerated achievements of the Bengal Sultan. In view of the testimony of Minhaju-s Siraj as well as of the piecemeal political division of the Brahmaputra valley of this period, as depicted in the Ahom *Buranjis*, the statements of Gunabhiram Barua, Gait and Stewart seem to be unwarranted. Sukapha, the first Ahom king, was still wandering about the region of the Patkai Hills when Sultan Ghiyasu-d din's invasion took place, and a number of independent political units predominated in Assam proper, whom the Muslim conqueror must need have encountered and defeated before he could have marched to Sadiya. But the admittedly short duration of his Kamarupa campaign and its abrupt end make the subjugation of all these political entities improbable within so limited a time.

We may note in passing that 20 silver coins of Sultan Ghiyasu-d din, all of them minted in Bengal, were discovered in the vicinity of the old fort of Bihar, in Koch Bihar, in 1872; their latest date being 627 A.H.—only three years after his Kamarupa campaign. Another coin of the same monarch was found in Gauhati in November, 1880. If the burial of these coins might be regarded as the memento of his expedition, he appeared to have proceeded no further than Gauhati.

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elapsed before another attempt upon the Kamarupa kingdom was rendered feasible. It was sometime between 1253-1255 A.D., that Malik Ikhtiyaru-d din Yuz-buk-i Tughril Khan assumed sovereign status in Bengal, with the title of Sultan Mughisu-d din. He appears to have been a strong and ambitious ruler, and signalised his reign by an attempt at a real subjugation of Kamarupa. In 1257 A. D., he started on his mission from Lakhanawati at the head of an adequate army, crossed the river Karatoya and entered Kamarupa. The reigning king, who was feeble-hearted, dared not fight the Muhammdan invader, and fled away from the capital leaving him an easy victor. The Bengal Sultan triumphantly advanced up the Brahmaputra to the region of the Bar Nadi, and gathered immense spoils. As he was determined to retain his prize permanently, he built a mosque* and tried to establish the Islamic faith in the conquered land on a solid basis.

Sultan Mughisu-d din's Kamarupa campaign (1257 A. D.).

Meanwhile the Kamarupa king opened negotiations to induce Sultan Mughisu-d din to evacuate his domain. He offered to pay the Muslim invader an annual tribute in gold and elephants and otherwise to comply strictly with the observances due from a vassal, but the latter turned a deaf ear to the proposal.

With the advent of the spring rains, the Muhammadan army was reduced to a sad plight. The Kamarupa king came out of his refuge, and opened up the water dykes all round his territory, submerging the spring harvest altogether. The whole Brahmaputra valley having been flooded, starvation faced the invaders. A retreat was at once decided upon, and as the plains were under water, the Muhammadan host was compelled to move along the foot of the hills skirting the Brahmaputra, but was greatly harassed by the guerilla warfare of the enemy.

* Gunabhiram Barua's Assam *Buranji*, p. 73; Stewart's History of Bengal, pp. 42-43.

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At last an open encounter took place in which the Muhammadans were severely defeated. The Bengal Sultan was wounded and taken prisoner along with his entire force.* The first serious endeavour of Muslim Bengal to subjugate Kamarupa thus ended in a tragedy.

Its failure.

* *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, English translation, pp. 764-66.

A great deal of confusion prevails with regard to this campaign. The *Riyazu-s Salatin* (English translation, p. 79) does not at all mention it. The name of the Bengal Sultan concerned is even omitted. What is worse still is the fact that its author confuses him with a subsequent Bengal governor named Tughril Khan (who assumed independence, during the regime of the Delhi Emperor Ghiyasu-d din Balban, under the title of Sultan Mughisu-d din) and ascribes to him the conquest of Kamarupa, thus ignoring the clear testimony of the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*. Gait (History of Assam, first edition, p. 35) and Blochmann (JASB, 1873, pp. 246–47) perpetuate the error of the *Riyaz*, though the former subsequently (History of Assam, second edition, p. 37) corrects himself. Gunabhiram Barua (Assam *Buranji*, p. 73), on his part, misconstrues the long name of the Bengal Sultan as denoting two different persons "Malik Yuz-buk" and "Tughril Khan", and mentions two separate attacks on Kamarupa at about the same time, while in fact there was only one attack led by one and the same man.

It may be pointed out that Minhaju-s Siraj gives us interesting details regarding the expedition a critical study of which yields valuable results, particularly with regard to its limit. The physical configuration of the tract through which the return journey is stated to have been attempted eminently fits in with that of the lower Brahmaputra valley, especially the modern Goalpara and Kamrup Districts, the greater part of which consists of a level plain intersected by the Brahmaputra whose banks are skirted throughout by small hills. This leaves little doubt that the Muslim invader did not proceed farther than the Bar Nadi region and retreated therefrom. Moreover, the trick of cutting open dykes to let in flood-water on the fields around was a common one in Kamrup, as is mentioned by the Mughal historians. Again, it was from the sands of the Brahmaputra in Kamrup that gold was extracted and it was the wilds of Kamrup that teemed with elephants—both tempting items of tribute for the Bengal Sultan.

I may note in passing that numismatic evidence might be said to corroborate the Persian chronicle on the territorial limits of the campaign. Three coins of Sultan Mughisu-d din Yuz-buk were found along with the coins of other monarchs in Gauhati, in November, 1880. Their latest date being 653 A. H., it synchronises with the assumption of regal status by Mughisu-d din. This

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The disastrous expedition of Sultan Mughisu-d din was a sufficient deterrent to any more attempt upon the integrity of the Kamarupa kingdom, and it is no wonder that more than a generation passed away before there was a recurrence of hostilities in that quarter.*

Changes in the history of Bengal.

During this long time rapid changes had taken place in the histories of Bengal and Kamarupa. A series of governors passed in quick succession till Nasiru-d din Mahmud, son of the Delhi Emperor Ghiyasu-d din Balban was posted to Bengal. Soon after the death of his father (*c.* 1286 A.D.) Nasiru-d din assumed independent status, and became the progenitor of a new dynasty which reigned in Bengal up to the end of the third decade of the fourteenth century. The last of the Balban line of kings was Ghiyasu-d din Bahadur Shah. He was a vigorous and able person, and gave early proof of his ambitious nature. He rebelled against his father, and minted coins in his own name at Lakhanawati.† Afterwards he seized Sunargaon for himself and set up independent rule there.‡ His next

has led Mr. Stapleton (JASB, 1910, p. 150) to suggest that the Gauhati find may be regarded as a "relic of the Kamarupa expedition of Sultan Mughisu-d din Yuz-buk, deposited by a Musalman soldier in Gauhati, or more probably the coins represent a loot captured from the Musalmans by the then inhabitants there."

* The *Riyazu-s Salatin* (English translation, p. 79) and following it R. D. Banerjee (*Banglar Itihash*, p. 66) mention the subjugation of Kamarupa by a viceroy of Lakhanawati—Tughril Khan *alias* Sultan Mughisu-d din (*c.* 1279 A. D.). No contemporary or even non-contemporary Persian authority other than the *Riyaz* refers to this incident the authenticity of which may well be doubted. As I have already suggested, the author of the *Riyaz* (and unfortunately its translator as well) has fallen into a confusion and has erroneously attributed to this Bengal viceroy the conquest achieved by Malik Iktiyaru-d din Yuz-buk-i Tughril Khan in 1257 A. D. Perhaps the most convincing proof of the cogency of my view is the entire omission of the last named person in the *Riyaz*, a glaring defect in view of the detailed account of his career given by the author of the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*.

† R. D. Banerjee, *Banglar Itihash*, p. 89.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 89.

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act was an attack on Kamarupa, and through it an advance into the heart of the Brahmaputra valley.

In Kamarupa a great change had occurred not only in the nomenclature but also in the political position, about the end of the thirteenth century. The name had been altered to that of Kamata and the territorial extent limited to the region between the Karatoya on the west, the northern part of the modern Mymensingh on the south-east and the Bar Nadi on the extreme east. Even within this restricted area the tract east of the river Manas seems often to have passed out of the hands of the Kamata kings. Henceforward the rulers of Kamata appear to have been frequently at war with the Ahom monarchs, and thus they became an easy prey to the Muhammadans in Bengal.

And in Kamarupa.

It was about the year 1321-22 A. D. (721-22 A. H.) that the Bengal Sultan Ghiyasu-d din Bahadur Shah found himself strong enough to leave Sunargaon and move up the Brahmaputra to attack the south-eastern frontier of the Kamarupa kingdom, which then stretched to the north and east of the old course of the river Brahmaputra and thus covered the northern part of the modern Mymensingh District. He subjugated it, and afterwards with this base he indulged in a whirlwind military campaign up the Brahmaputra as far as the modern Nowgong (Assam). It proved to be only a plundering raid of short duration and led to no lasting results. So its memory seems to have been entirely lost, and a few coins discovered in recent times are probably the sole reminiscences of this episode.*

Sultan Ghiyasu-d din Bahadur Shah's invasion (1321-22 A.D.).

* Circumstantial evidence, furnished by the provenance of coins and the contemporary anarchical political condition of north-eastern India, leads me to hazard this conjecture with regard to Ghiyasu-d din Bahadur Shah's Kamarupa campaign for which no direct evidence is available.

In the Koch Bihar hoard of coins found in 1863, one of Ghiusu-d din Bahadur Shah's coins dated 772 A.H. and minted at Qasbah Ghiyaspur, a *mauza* on the Banar river near Enayetpur, Dt. Mymensingh, was found (*vide* JASB, 1922,

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A chequered career was in store for Ghiyasu-d din Bahadur Shah. Six years after the Kamarupa campaign (c. 1327-1328 A. D.) he was defeated and killed in an encounter with an army sent by the reigning Emperor Muhammad bin Tughlak.

p. 417). In 1909, a number of his coins were discovered at Enayetpur (a village on raised land, about 15 miles south-east of the Mymensingh town and close to Ghiyaspur), two of which dated 721 A.H. were minted at the same place—Ghiyaspur (*vide* Supplement to the Catalogue of the Provincial Coin Cabinet, Shillong, pp. 110-111). In 1911, another of his coins dated 721 A.H. (mint doubtful) was found in Rupaibari, Dt. Nowgong (Assam) along with other coins of his father and elder brother (*vide* Supplement to the Catalogue of the Provincial Coin Cabinet, Shillong, pp. 110-11). It means that coins of the same mint struck at or about the same time (721-22 A.H.) have been discovered in the south-eastern part of the modern Mymensingh, in Koch Bihar, as well as in the northern part of Nowgong town. This synchronism regarding the date and mintage of coins found in quite far-off places is striking. If it is permissible to hold that the coins are really relics of Ghiyasu-d din Bahadur Shah's military excursion, their provenance throws light on the route of his march. Starting from Sunargaon, the Bengal Sultan moved along the banks of the Brahmaputra, subjugated the south-eastern part of the Kamarupa kingdom, comprising the region round Enayetpur and Ghiyaspur, and then followed up his victory by an attack upon the interior (the modern Koch Bihar), whence he resumed touch with the river and advanced up to Nowgong. Both geographically and politically the region round Enayetpur and Ghiyaspur seems to have formed the south-eastern part of the Kamarupa kingdom of old. The *Mahabharata*, the *Yogini Tantra* and Hiuen Tsiang's account all bear this out. So an attack on it was naturally preliminary to an advance into the heart of the country.

The vigorous territorial expansion carried out by Shamsu-d din Firoz Shah probably induced his ambitious, energetic, and able son Ghiyasu-d din Bahadur Shah to continue the same process at the expense of the Kamarupa state, in the beginning of the fourteenth century. The then anarchical political condition of the Brahmaputra valley in the absence of a strong central authority, was particularly tempting. The Ahoms were busy consolidating their power in the extreme east : westward the Chutiyas, the Kacharis and the Bhuiyas were warring against one another : the Kamata king embroiled in frequent warfare with the Ahoms was too weak to resist foreign foes. Thus it was quite in the nature of things that a Muslim invasion of north-eastern India would take place at that juncture. It may be noted in passing that a passage in the *Yogini Tantra* (*vide* Gait's Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, p. 52) appears to allude, though vaguely, to an invasion of Kamarupa and Assam about this time.

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His demise made Bengal once more an appanage to the Delhi Empire.

Emperor Muhammad bin Tughlak's expedition (1332-33 A. D.).

The imperialistic mantle of the Bengal ruler Ghiyasu-d din Bahadur Shah fell on the Delhi monarch Muhammad bin Tughlak, and ambitious and enterprising as he was, he took up the former's hostile policy towards Kamarupa. In 1332-33 A. D. (733-34 A. H.), Muhammad bin Tughlak despatched a large army of 100,000 cavalry for the subjugation of that kingdom. The details of the expedition are wanting but there is no doubt that it had a tragic end and the army perished to a man. A second venture appears to have been decided upon, but it did not materialise.*

* *Alamgirnamah*, p. 731. It may be noted that a single passage in this work is our sole authority regarding this expedition. When translated, it runs as follows :—"Muhammad Shah, the son of Tughlak Shah, who was king of several of the provinces of Hindustan, sent a well appointed army of a hundred thousand cavalry to conquer Assam, but they were all relegated to oblivion in that country of enchantment, and no intelligence or vestige of them remained. Another army was despatched to avenge this disaster, but when it arrived in Bengal, it was panic-stricken and shrank from the enterprise."

No contemporary (Shams-i Siraj Afif, Ibn Batuta) or non-contemporary (Nizamu-d din Ahmad, Badaoni, Ferishta) author, not even Shihabu-d din Talish, mentions this event. The earlier Ahom and Assamese *Buranjis* are also silent. This might raise a natural presumption against its historicity. But the evidence supplied by the provenance of Muhammad bin Tughlak's coins tends to support the account of the *Alamgirnamah*. A number of Bengal coins of Muhammad bin Tughlak, dated 733-34 A.H. (1332-33 A. D.), were found by Mr. Stapleton in the vicinity of Enayetpur, District Mymensingh, in 1910 (*vide* JASB, 1922, p. 425). This leads me to suppose that the political influence established over that region by Ghiyasu-d din Bahadur Shah survived his death, and from this base Muhammad bin Tughlak's army advanced up the Brahmaputra into the heart of the Kamarupa kingdom but only to meet with a disaster. Unfortunately we are quite in the dark as to how far the army proceeded and how it perished. It seems however reasonable to hold that the invading host did not reach farther than the Bar Nadi region so that it could hardly have made Assam proper feel its impact. The statement in the *Alamgirnamah* that it was sent to conquer Assam and was relegated to oblivion in that country must not be taken seriously. The short duration of the campaign and its

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A few years after Muhammad bin Tughlak's Kamarupa campaign, Bengal history entered on a new path. Taking advantage of the prevailing political and administrative disorder of the Delhi Empire, an energetic officer proclaimed independence in Bengal under the title of Fakhru-d din Abul Muzaffar Mubarak Shah, and made Sunargaon the seat of his power (*c.* 1336 A. D.). About the same time another official followed suit with Lakhanawati as the capital, and styled himself as Alau-d din Abul Muzaffar Ali Shah.* Thus was laid the foundation of the independent Muhammadan sovereignty in Bengal which lasted at one stretch for about two hundred years.

Followed by great changes in Bengal history.

It was however reserved for Shamsu-d din Abul Muzaffar Ilyas Shah, a later Sultan, to end the dual government established in Bengal and exercise untrammelled authority over the whole country.† His rule, lasting close upon two decades, was a busy one. He had to put down his rivals, consolidate his power and also to encounter a serious attack of the Delhi Emperor Firoz Shah Tughlak. He rose equal to his task and even found time to extend his territories up to Benares in the west. But Kamarupa appears to have escaped his attention.

Sikandar Shah inherited the ability, ambition and energy of his father Ilyas Shah. He rose against him and struck coins in

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speedy destruction preclude the possibility of an advance into the upper Brahmaputra valley which was the seat of the Ahom power.

As regards the date of the expedition, Blochmann (JASB, 1872, p. 79 footnote) and following him, Gait (History of Assam, p. 37) suggest 1337 A.D. This is hardly probable. No Bengal coins of Muhammad bin Tughlak having as yet been found dated subsequent to 735 A.H. (1334 A. D.), it is reasonable to infer that the Kamarupa campaign took place at least on or before that date when his sway was still unchallenged in Bengal—the inevitable base of an attack on Kamarupa. In view of the fact that the coins found in Enayetpur are dated 733-34 A.H. (1332—33 A. D.) the campaign, whose relic they probably are, might be said to have taken place at that time.

* R. D. Banerjee, *Banglar Itihash*, p. 105.

† R. D. Banerjee, *Banglar Itihash*, p. 109.

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his own name even during Ilyas's life-time.* Sikandar succeeded to the throne about the year 1456 (758 A. H.) and a year after, launched an attack on Kamarupa. The time was very opportune. The reigning Kamarupa king was involved in a quarrel with the Ahom monarch Sukrangpha and could not offer serious opposition to the foreign invader. Though the details of the campaign are not known, it is apparent that Sikandar Shah scored an easy triumph. He seems to have proceeded unchecked as far east as the region between the Manas and the Bar Nadi (i.e., Kamrup proper), and signalised his success by issuing coins minted at Kamrup.

Sultan Sikandar Shah's Kamarupa campaign (1357 A.D.).

But his victory was short-lived. The news of the imminent renewal of the attack on Bengal by Firoz Shah Tughlak compelled Sikandar to withdraw hastily from Kamarupa and gird up his loins to save his own kingdom against the Emperor.†

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* R. D. Banerjee, *Banglar Itihash*, p. 148.

† It is curious to note that our sole authority regarding Sikandar Shah's Kamarupa conquest is one of his coins issued in 759 A.H. (1357 A.D.) from *arsat Kamru* (*vide* Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, Vol. II., p. 152, Coin No. 38). No contemporary or non-contemporary Persian work mentions this event which does not find a place in the Ahom and Assamese *Buranjis* as well. Still there is no reason to question its authenticity. The unerring testimony of his coin minted in the conquered tract (Kamarupa), supported by the chaotic political condition of the Brahmaputra valley of the mid-fourteenth century places such an invasion beyond the realm of doubt. The name of the mint town *Kamru* (Persianised form of Kamarupa) suggests that the Moslem conqueror must have reached the region east of the Manas and west of the Bar Nadi. This enables us to refute Mr. Stapleton's contention (JASB, 1910, p. 622) that Sikandar's martial exploits were confined only to the north and east of the old course of the Brahmaputra in the modern Mymensingh District. The military activities of the previous Muhammadan rulers (*e. g.*, Ghiyasu-d din Bahadur Shah, Muhammad bin Tughlak) had been so persistent in that region as to include it within the pale of his own authority and there was hardly any necessity for Sikandar Shah to attack it anew. As the mint town clearly indicates he directed his arms against the heart of the Kamarupa kingdom.

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Historians are silent with regard to the attitude towards Kamarupa of the parricide who succeeded Sikandar Shah in Bengal under the title of Ghiyasu-d din Abul Muzaffar Azam Shah, and reigned for about eight years (1389-1396 A. D.). But in view of the fact that the latest date, apparently the date of the inhumation, of the coins discovered in the Koch Bihar hoard of 1863 (*viz.*, 799 A.H.)* as well as in the Gauhati find of 1893 (*viz.*, 802 A.H.)† falls within the acknowledged period of his government (*viz.* 792-813 A.H.),‡ and in view of the mention, though vague, in the *Yogini Tantra*¶ of a Muhammadan attack on Kamarupa in *Saka* 1316 (1394 A. D., *c.* the 6th regnal year of Ghiyasu-d din Azam Shah), it appears reasonable to suggest that Ghiyasu-d din Azam Shah's reign was marked by the continuance of the political influence exerted by Muslim Bengal upon the kingdom of Kamarupa.

Ghiyasu-d din Azam Shah's attitude towards Kamarupa.

A dramatic change came over Bengal history a short time after the death of Ghiyasu-d din Azam Shah. A Hindu Raja supplanted the Ilyas Shahi kings and founded a new dynasty, which however did not last long. The old line was soon restored in the person of Nasiru-d din Mahmud Shah (*c.* 1442 A. D.). It is during the reign of his son and successor Ruknu-d din Barbak Shah (*c.* 1459-1474 A. D.) that warfare with Kamarupa was resumed.

The beginning of the fifteenth century is a period of great transition in Kamarupa history. The mist of legend and mythology now begins to clear away and sober historical atmosphere gradually appears. A strong monarchy was established at this time by the Khens. To what race the

Rise of the Khen dynasty in Kamarupa about the beginning of the 15th century.

* Thomas—Initial Coinage of Bengal, p. 75.

† A. S. of Bengal Proceedings, 1893, pp. 90-91.

‡ N. K. Bhattashali—Coins and Chronology of the Early Independent Sultans of Bengal, pp. 58-78.

¶ Gait's Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, p. 52.

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new rulers belonged is not known, but they were rapidly Hinduized, and assumed Hindu names and worshipped Hindu gods and goddesses. Though the origin of the new dynasty is mythical and is involved in deep obscurity, its kings (particularly the last of them) are genuine historical figures. The founder of the line is one Niladhvaj who established his capital at Kamatapur. He was succeeded by his son Chakradhvaj.

The third and the last ruler of the dynasty was Nilambar. He appears to have gained royal dignity about the beginning of the seventh decade of the fifteenth century. He is the greatest and the most powerful of the Khen kings and is said to have ruled a vast tract between the Karatoya on the west and the Bar Nadi on the east. He seems to have restored the old frontier of the Kamarupa kingdom on the south-east by regaining possession of the territories lying to the north and east of the old course of the Brahmaputra in northern Mymensingh, and he also constructed a magnificent road connecting his capital with the Ghoraghat region.

Nilambar, the third Khen king.

The great ambition, energy and ability displayed by the new Kamarupa king awakened the suspicion and ill-will of the contemporary Bengal Sultan, Ruknu-d din Barbak Shah, and a conflict between the two soon took place.

Was the contemporary of Sultan Ruknu-d din Barbak Shah.

Unfortunately the account of the struggle is buried beneath a mass of legends and supernatural elements from which it is very difficult to recover genuine truth. In a Persian manuscript titled the *Risalat-ush Shuhada*, written in the early years of Emperor Shah Jahans's reign, a detailed story regarding this incident is given. According to it, the Bengal Sultan Barbak Shah's army having been repeatedly defeated by Kameswar, king of Kamarupa, the former selected a holy man possessed of military talents, named Ismail Ghazi, to take the field against the latter. The Kamarupa king who was a brave and powerful military leader marched at the head of a large force to meet

Warfare between the two (*c.* 1473-74 A. D.).

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the Muhammadan commander. A sanguinary battle took place at Santosh (in the modern Dinajpur District) in which the Bengal army was completely defeated and destroyed, its general with a handful of followers being the only survivors. Peace overtures made by the vanquished having been sternly rejected by the victor, warfare was renewed. This time the supernatural gifts possessed by the saintly Muhammadan general were used against the Kamarupa king with good effect. The latter was awed into voluntary submission. He gladly accepted the Islamic faith and agreed to pay regular tribute to the Bengal Sultan. A tragic fate however awaited Ismail Ghazi, against whom the ears of his royal patron were poisoned ; he was beheaded ("on the 14th *Shaban* 78"—obviously 878 A.H.) early in January, 1474.*

Stripped of its legendary and supernatural crust, there appears nothing intrinsically improbable in the above story which may therefore be held to contain a kernel of truth regarding a clash of arms between Nilambar, the powerful king of Kamarupa, and the Bengal monarch Ruknu-d din Barbak Shah about the last quarter of the fifteenth century.† As I have

* JASB, 1874, pp. 215-21.

† A great deal of uncertainty has so long prevailed with regard to this first trial of strength of the Khen dynasty with the Bengal Sultanate. Gait (History of Assam, p. 45, footnote) lightly dismisses the whole account as spurious on the ground that "it is wholly uncorroborated." Martin (Eastern India, Vol. II. p. 680, Vol. III. p. 411) ascribes the defeat and destruction of "Nilambar Raja" to Ismail Ghazi during the regime of "Nusrat Khan, king of Gaur". He next seeks to identify the Gaur ruler with Nasrat Shah, the son and successor of Alau-d din Husain Shah, but curiously enough, himself appears rather sceptical about the truth of his contention.

It need hardly be pointed out that Martin's observations are quite contrary to the testimony of coins and inscriptions and of sober history. The mention of Ismail Ghazi and Nasrat Shah in the same breath is, by itself, a glaring piece of anachronism which cannot at all be countenanced. Further, as will be seen later on, Nasrat Shah's hands were full nearer home and he had neither the leisure nor the energy and ability to employ them in the affairs of distant Kamarupa. Gait's statement questioning the historicity of the whole incident may as well be challenged and there appears no reason to doubt that the legendary account of Barbak Shah and his general Ismail Ghazi's conflict with the

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already said, the reign of Nilambar was one of great activity and vigour, and it is no wonder that his growing political ambition should bring him into collision with the reigning Bengal Sultan whose kingdom was contiguous to his own. In the inevitable conflict that ensued, the Kamarupa king on the whole appears to have got the better of his adversary, and the supernatural feat which is alleged to have turned the final issue in favour of the latter is too palpable an absurdity to be taken seriously. But the triumph of the Kamarupa king was only momentary. A black cloud soon darkened his bright future and the air was thick with the impending gloom. Viewed from this standpoint, Ismail Ghazi's encounter is only the ominous prologue to the historic drama of which the defeat of Nilambar, followed by the sack of his capital Kamatapur at the hands of the great Bengal Sultan Alau-d din Husain Shah, was the tragic epilogue.

Within less than two decades of Ismail Ghazi's venture upon Kamarupa, the din of battle and the clash of arms again disturbed the placid content of its ruler Nilambar. This was made possible owing to momentous changes having taken place in the history of Muhammadan Bengal in the interval. The reign of Sultan Ruknu-d din Barbak Shah is memorable for the fact that he ventured on the dangerous experiment of raising a large bodyguard of Abyssinian eunuchs, who from their humble position gradually made themselves the master of the kingdom. The climax was reached when Jalalu-d din Fath Shah, a younger brother of Barbak Shah, was murdered by an Abyssinian eunuch, who stepped into his shoes as Sultan Shahzada Barbag. This

Bengal after the death of Ruknu-d din Barbak Shah.

Kamarupa king, termed as Kameswar—obviously a variant of *Kamateswara* or Lord of Kamata, contains a stratum of truth. The peculiar political condition of the Kamarupa kingdom of this period, the great volume of popular tradition regarding the military exploits of the favourite Muhammadan saint Ismail Ghazi prevalent in the Ghoraghat region, as well as the existence of numerous monuments erected to his memory in the same quarter, all lend colour to my view that the narrative contained in the Persian manuscript is genuine at least in its outline.

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meant practically the end of the Ilyas Shahi dynasty. For, excepting the brief interlude of Nasiru-d din Mahmad Shah II's reign, the throne of Bengal was henceforward occupied successively by a number of Abyssinians till the last of them was dethroned from power, on account of his cruelty and misrule, by his popular vizier Sayyid Husain Sharif Maki.

Accession of Alau-d din Husain Shah to the throne (1493 A.D.).

The vizier proclaimed himself king as Alau-d din Husain Shah in 1493 A. D., and founded a new line which lasted close upon half a century. "The new king proved to be the best and the greatest ruler that independent Bengal ever knew, and his name is famous to this day from the frontier of Orissa to the banks of the Brahmaputra." It was early in his reign that the first great endeavour was made by Muhammadan Bengal at a permanent conquest of the kingdom of Kamarupa.

His conquest of Kamarupa : its genesis.

A great deal of obscurity and confusion has gathered round the origin as well as the details of Alau-d din Husain Shah's Kamarupa campaign which, in its essence, is an undisputed historical event.* According to popular tradition, the cruel and inhuman treatment meted out by the Khen king Nilambar

* Inspite of the fact that the materials (particularly numismatic and epigraphic), extant regarding this monarch's reign are greater and more varied than those we possess with regard to that of any of his predecessors, our knowledge about his warfare against Kamarupa is very meagre. No contemporary or nearly contemporary authentic literary evidence is available on the point, and the only sure testimony is furnished by his numerous coins and inscriptions which dub him pithily as "the conqueror of *Kamru* and *Kamta*." Of the Persian works, the *Alamgirnamah* and the *Fathiya* refer vaguely to his Assam campaign but are unaccountably silent on its inevitable antecedent—the conquest of Kamarupa. The earlier Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis* do not mention it. It is only the *Riyazu-s Salatin*, a late eighteenth century compilation, that gives some definite information regarding it. Thus, in the absence of first-hand literary testimony, the coins and inscriptions of Alau-d din Husain Shah, reinforced by a great mass of popular tradition still current regarding the defeat and destruction of the Kamata king and his capital, are our mainstay.

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to his Brahmin minister caused the latter to seek revenge by drawing upon his master the scourge of foreign invasion. The reigning Bengal Sultan Alau-d din Husain Shah was approached and persuaded to attack Kamatapur.* Energetic and ambitious as he was, he eagerly grasped at this excellent opportunity for expanding the bounds of his kingdom in the north-east at the expense of the Khen domain. Its king was no weakling. The power and ability displayed by him in his last encounter with the Muhammadans must have brought home to the Bengal Sultan the necessity of putting him down at that opportune moment. Interest and ambition alike thus moved Alau-d din Husain Shah to launch a vigorous expedition against the king of Kamatapur in no time.

Very little is known with regard to the details of the warfare that ensued. It appears that in the very year of his assumption of royal power (1493 A. D.), Alau-d din Husain Shah started on his mission with a large army of infantry and cavalry. A great number of war-boats also accompanied him. Distracted and considerably weakened by internal feud, the Khen king Nilambar could not check the advance of the invading host which soon reached the vicinity of his capital Kamatapur and attempted to carry it by storm. As the city was very strongly fortified it defied the assault of the Bengal Sultan who was compelled to lay siege to it. The siege of Kamatapur seems to have been a protracted one,† and, if local tradition is to be believed, the

And upshot—capture of Kamatapur, the capital, and the overthrow of the Khen dynasty.

* For details see Martin's Eastern India, Vol. III. pp. 410-12.

† The popular tradition that it lasted for twelve years is probably much exaggerated. On the other hand, the impression which the coin legend of the Bengal Sultan seeks to create in our mind that the campaign was finished in a year or so appears to be misleading, as it makes the struggle too short. A number of Alau-d-din Husain Shah's coins dated 899 A.H. (1493 A. D.), the year of his accession to the throne, have been found which bear on the reverse the epithet "conqueror of *Kamrw, Kamta.....*" (Catalogue of Coins, Indian Museum, Calcutta, Vol. II. p. 173, Coin No. 175 : Supplement to the Catalogue

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astute Muhammadan sovereign succeeded in capturing it only by an act of black treachery. The fate of the Kamarupa king is again uncertain. It is probable that he was captured and put to death. Thus after a rule of three quarters of a century the Khen dynasty was overthrown, and Kamarupa once more became a prey to internal rub and chaos from which it had been reclaimed and welded into a powerful state by the genius of the Khens. And it is no wonder that "the overthrow of Nilambar is looked upon by the natives as a most unfortunate event."

The destruction of king Nilambar and the sack of his capital did not satisfy the Muslim conqueror, who followed it up by an advance towards the eastern frontier of the Khen domain and reached unopposed as far as the Bar Nadi region. The whole of Nilambar's kingdom was thus overrun and incorporated with Muhammadan Bengal. In the first flush of his

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of the Provincial Coin Cabinet, Shillong, p. 150, Coin No. $\frac{6}{7}$, p. 152, Coin No. $\frac{6}{7}$: Catalogue of Indian Coins, British Museum, p. 148, Coin No. 123 etc.) I am inclined to think that the Kamarupa or more properly the Kamata expedition was really begun by Alau-d din Husain Shah in the very first year of his reign, but its issue probably continued long doubtful, as tradition in its essence would seem to indicate and as the remnants of the elaborate entrenchments of the invading host, strewn all round Kamatapur, would also suggest. The traditional date for the capture of Kamatapur and the destruction of the Khen dynasty is the year 1498 A.D., and this has been accepted as true by Messrs. Blochmann (JASB, 1873, p. 240), Gunabhiram Barua (Assam *Buranji*, p. 49), and Gait (JASB 1893, p. 279 ; History of Assam, p. 44). This appears to be just too late in view of the fact that the supplementary campaign against Assam was undertaken immediately after the Kamata expedition and was over at least before the year 1497, the year of the accession of the Dihingia Raja to the Ahom throne. At any rate, it seems to be certain that the subjugation of the entire Khen domain coming in the wake of the sack of its capital could not have been completed before the fifteenth century had run out. It is not till the 1st of *Ramzan*, 907 A.H. 10th March, 1502), that the Bengal Sultan apparently felt himself fully justified in commemorating his conquest of *Kamru* and *Kamta* by means of votive inscriptions such as have been found in English Bazar, Maldah (JASB, 1874, p. 281) as well as in the Ghoraghat region.

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splendid triumph, the Sultan did not allow the grass to grow under his feet and soon made a daring attempt upon the Ahom domain, which stretched eastward of the Bar Nadi far into the upper Brahmaputra valley. Though he attained initial success, the enterprise ultimately ended in a disaster. A son of the Sultan was killed, and almost the whole of the invading army was lost in Assam.

Followed by a futile raid on Assam.

The failure of the Assam raid must have greatly reacted on the position of the Bengal ruler in the newly conquered domain. Yet there is little doubt that Muhammadan influence in Kamarupa survived the shock of the disaster sustained in Assam. The coin legends continue to style Husain Shah as the conqueror of *Kamru* and *Kamta* as late as 924 A.H. (1518 A. D.) and it is certainly no empty boast on the part of the greatest independent sovereign of Medieval Bengal. An elaborate endeavour appears to have been made to keep hold of the conquered territory. Extensive memorials of the Muslim occupation in the form of buildings and tanks, complete and incomplete, are said to have been in existence around Kamatapur when Dr. Buchanan Hamilton visited the place in 1809.*

Survival of Muslim authority in Kamarupa.

The authority of the Bengal Sultan appears to have been well founded in the region east of the Manas river as well, where Hajo was the main stronghold. After the defeat and death of his son in Assam war, two Muhammadan chieftains (whose identity remains doubtful) exercised political power

Up to the region round Hajo.

* A tank lined with brick, believed to be of Muhammadan workmanship, containing on its south side remains of two buildings in Moorish style, within a mile of the Khen capital, is said to have been noticed by Dr. Hamilton (*vide* Martin's Eastern India, Vol. III. p. 433). He describes also the remains of the camp of the Muslim invaders termed as Barogari, owing to the belief that it contained twelve houses made of brick ; he mentions as well a tank called "Hoseyn Dighi eight coss north from Kumarirkoth, said to have been dug by Hoseyn king of Bengal" (*vide* Martin's Eastern India, Vol. III. pp. 437-38, 448)

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in the territory round Hajo. While the first is a mere name—Masundar Ghazi, the second, known as Sultan Ghiyasu-d din (Aulia), is undoubtedly a genuine historical figure. He is reputed to have introduced a colony of Muhammadans in Kamarupa and to have attempted to propagate Islam there. He began a grand mosque on the top of a hill at Hajo but died before it reached completion. He was interred near the mosque which to this day is known as Poa Mecca. His name survives in Muslim popular tradition in Assam which has exalted him to the dignity of a saint, and his tomb is still visited by all pious Muhammadans there.*

Thus it appears clear that notwithstanding the discomfiture which attended Muhammadan arms in the supplementary campaign in Assam, the main enterprise, directed towards the subjugation of the Kamarupa kingdom, attained fair success. The Muhammadans continued to be a powerful political factor in north-eastern India for more than three decades after the conquest of Kamarupa, and it was only under heavy pressure put upon them from the east by the Assamese and from the west by the rising Koch power, that they withdrew from that quarter.

Husain Shah's Kamarupa campaign—a fair success.

A period of unrelieved gloom occurs in the history of Kamarupa after the overthrow of the Khens. The disintegration of their kingdom was inevitably followed by the rise of small independent principalities of whose petty quarrels and warfare no account reaches us. When light again dawns we find a new dynasty of kings gradually emerging to the forefront on the extinction of the rival powers.

This was founded by the Koches. They were the most energetic and powerful of the numerous tribes which had appeared in Kamarupa after the fall of the Khen dynasty. At first they were ruled by a number of petty chieftains,

* In connection with the Mughal warfare in Kamrup, which for a time centred round Hajo, Mirza Nathan (*Baharistan* MS. p. 223b) refers to the hill of Sultan Ghiyasu-d din Aulia whom he designates as a *darwesh*,

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but afterwards these coalesced under one centralised authority. Thus was laid the foundation of a strong independent monarchy which gradually extended its sway over the greater part of the Kamarupa of old by supplanting the Muhammadans on the one hand, and subjugating the "Baro Bhuiyas"* on the other.

Rise of the Koch power.

The advent of the Koches as the dominating political factor in Kamarupa ushers in a new epoch in its history and gives it an entirely new character. It means not merely the rise of a new dynasty but also the real transition from the Medieval to the Modern age in Kamarupa. The era of myth and legend finally passes away and that of sober history definitely dawns. With the exception of the progenitor of the royal line, the other Koch kings are well-known historical personages, the details of whose career are known to us not only from their coins but also from contemporary as well as noncontemporary Persian and native chronicles. Paucity of material now disappears, and we are, on the other hand, compelled to pick and choose. Further, a new nomenclature is soon evolved by the ruling dynasty for its seat of power. The kingdom of Kamarupa of ancient times and that of Kamata of the Middle Ages now gives way to a new state, that of Koch Bihar, named after the Koch capital city of Bihar. The history of Kamarupa and Kamata is thus merged in that of the Koch state, which survived through various phases the contact of the Mughal and the British power and exists even now under the same dynasty founded four centuries ago.

Its significance in Kamarupa history.

Though authorities differ with regard to the origin of the Koch political power, there is no reason to doubt that its real founder was one Bisu, who is generally known by his Hinduized

* I have not given any account of the origin and history of the Baro Bhuiyas as it is beyond my scope. It is well sketched in Gait's History of Assam, (pp 38-40, 48) and in N. Basu's Social History of Kamarupa (Vol. II. Chapters I and II, pp. 1-51).

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name of Biswa Singh. He gradually emerges into the limelight of history with a brilliant and fascinating personality. Like his Mughal contemporary Babur, he was a born leader of men, but unlike him, he combined in himself great military talents with unrivalled genius for administrative organisation. He appears to have installed himself as king about 1529-30 A.D.

Reign of Biswa Singh.

Biswa Singh's early years were spent in the extirpation of rival elements, and it was he who was mainly responsible for the eradication of Muhammadan authority and influence in Kamarupa. Unfortunately no account of the warfare waged by him to get rid of the foreigners is available. Only echoes of it reach us in stray references to his repair of Hindu temples ravaged by the Muslims.* Vested interests die hard. The Muhammadans must have offered a stubborn resistance in Kamarupa, and they attempted afterwards to create a new sphere of influence in the neighbouring realm of Assam by a determined attack on it, but all to no purpose. Hard pressed by the Koches and the Assamese, the Muhammadans soon packed up bag and baggage and evacuated the north-eastern frontier region altogether.

His activities against the Muhammadans in Kamarupa.

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* Gunabhiram Barua (Assam *Buranji*, p. 56) tells us an interesting story regarding the rediscovery of the ruined temple of Kamakhya on the Nilachala hill (west of Gauhati) and the rebuilding of the same by Biswa Singh. Gunabhiram attributes the decay of the sacred shrine to natural causes. Popular apathy and indifference towards Hinduism, consequent on the advent of Buddhism, is said to have facilitated the process. But I am inclined to read in the ruins of the Hindu temple a memento of Muslim iconoclasm. An anonymous writer in the Calcutta Review (1867, p. 528) mentions, in connection with Alau-d din Husain Shah's Kamarupa campaign, that "the stone temples of Kamakhya on the Nilachala and of Moha Muni at Hajou...and others were sacrificed to Muslim fanaticism." Mr Blochmann (JASB 1874, p. 281) quotes this statement by way of approval. Biswa Singh must have made an earnest effort to wipe out the stain of Muslim desecrations by repairing the damaged shrines before he directed his energies towards stopping the evil at its source by overpowering the local Muhammadan chieftains.

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This left the Koch king master of the situation. Before long he had the satisfaction of seeing himself the unchallenged ruler of a strong state extending from the river Karatoya on the west to the Bar Nadi on the east. He built a splendid capital city in Koch Bihar. The Koch King appears to have attempted more than once to extend his domain at the cost of the Ahom state but without success. His reign lasting for about a quarter of a century was productive of great results, and when he died in 1555 A.D., he left Koch Bihar a strong and prosperous state, fit to stem the tide of foreign invasion.

Momentous changes in the Imperial and Bengal politics and their bearing on the Muslim position in Kamarupa.

Meanwhile Muhammadan Bengal witnessed kaleidoscopic changes which also had their influence in causing the steady disappearance of the Islamic sway in Kamarupa. Alau-d-din Husain Shah's son and successor, Nasrat Shah (1519-32 A.D.), appears to have been an indolent and tactless sovereign. He was moreover deeply involved in grave political complications which arose owing to the defeat of Ibrahim Lodi, the last Afghan Emperor of Delhi, by the Mughal adventurer Babur, and which continued during the reign of the latter's son Humayun. Nasrat Shah's successor in Bengal had also to suffer similar troubles. So they two could not possibly turn their attention towards Kamarupa where things took their own course. Muhammadan authority continued to flourish there for some time under local chieftains. But it was soon made to give way before the rising Koch power and the vigorous onslaught of the Ahoms so that its last vestige disappeared not long after the demise of Nasrat Shah.

In about six years' time (1538 A. D.) the first period of independent Sultanate in Bengal ended, when the last king of the Husaini dynasty named Ghiyasu-d din Muhammad Shah died in course of his struggle against Sher Khan Afghan. Two years after this event Humayun was defeated at the battle of the Ganges, and the Empire of Delhi passed under the control of

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Sher Shah. Bengal soon became an appanage to Delhi after two centuries of separate existence. Under the weak successors of Sher Shah it once more regained free status and retained it for about a quarter of a century more (1552-76 A.D.), under the Sur and the Kararani Afghans.

Reign of the Afghan Sultan Sulaiman Kararani.

The first independent Afghan ruler of Bengal was Muhammad Shah of the Sur tribe. He reigned only for two years (1552-54 A.D.). Two of his sons followed him in quick succession, and by 1563 A.D., they gave way to the Kararani Afghans. It was during the time of Sulaiman, the founder of the Kararani hegemony in Bengal, that a conflict with the Koch Bihar state took place.

And of his Koch contemporary Nara Narayan.

During this period of great political upheaval in the Delhi Empire as well as in the Bengal Sultanate, Koch Bihar continued to grow in prosperity under the aegis of Biswa Singh's brilliant son and successor Malla Deva (*Mal Gosain* of Abul Fazl), who assumed the name of Nara Narayan after his ascension to the throne. The new monarch soon proved himself "not a chip of the old block but the old block itself". He not only imbibed the political, administrative and military talents of his father but added to them a munificent patronage of Hindu religion and learning, and a refined taste for magnificent public works. He was great in peace and war and his reign ushers the golden age in the annals of the Koch kingdom.

Nara Narayan possessed in his younger brother, Sukladhvaj, a great captain of war under whose guidance the Koch state rapidly moved forward in its career of political expansion and made its first assay as an imperial power. Soon after his succession to the throne in 1555 A. D.,* Nara Narayan, with

* A great deal of confusion and doubt has hitherto gained ground with regard to the date of the reign of the first two Koch kings, Biswa Singh and Nara Narayan, primarily owing to the silence of the *Bansabali* and the Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis* on the point. Gait (JASB, 1893, pp. 301-303) has taken great

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his brother-general, launched upon an aggressive military career which was crowned with brilliant success. Assam was subjugated in 1562A.D., and afterwards a series of whirlwind campaigns were directed successively against the potentates of Kachar, Manipur, Jaintia, Tipperah, Khairam, Dimarua and Sylhet. Though the net result of these expeditions does not appear to have been anything more than a lip-deep acknowledgment of political vassalage and a hollow promise of payment of tribute on the part of the defeated chiefs, and as such, seems hardly

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pains to suggest that the former began his reign in 1509 A.D. and continued till 1534 A. D., when he was succeeded by the latter whose rule ended only in 1584 A.D. In his History of Assam (pp. 48, 49, 57) Gait modifies his views and puts forward 1515–1540, and 1540-84 A.D., as the periods of the rule of Biswa Singh and his son Nara Narayan respectively. Though differing with regard to the date of Biswa Singh's reign, Munshi Jadu Nath Ghosh (*Rajopakhyan*, p. 30), Ram Chandra Ghosh (Hunter's Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. X. p. 407), H. N. Chowdhury (Cooch Bihar State and its Land Revenue Settlement, p. 230) and Dr. Wade (MS. History of Assam) all agree that 1555 A. D. is the date of Nara Narayan's accession to the Koch throne. The evidence of king Nara Narayan's coins which are the earliest specimens extant of Koch coinage, considered along with the peculiar traditional custom of the Koch Bihar state to strike coins *only* to signalise the assumption of office by a new king (*vide* H. N. Chowdhury's book, p. 230, footnote 75, and the *Rajopakhyan*, p. 42) enables us to set at rest all speculation on the point, and to fix the dates of the first two Koch kings with a fair amount of precision. Seven coins have, up till now, been found of king Nara Narayan and all of them are dated *Saka* 1477 or 1555 A. D. (*vide* ASB. Proceedings, 1856, p. 457 ; JASB, 1874, p. 306 ; JASB, 1895, p. 238 ; Supplement to the Catalogue of the Provincial Coin Cabinet, Shillong, p. 363 ; Indian Historical Quarterly, September, 1926, p. 615), which is obviously the year of his succession to royal power. Going backwards from this date, the sheet-anchor of Koch chronology, for a length of 25 years (being the generally accepted period of Biswa Singh's rule) we arrive at 1529-30 A. D. as the approximate year of the beginning of the first king's reign. This date easily fits in with the continued survival of Muhammadan influence in Kamarupa upto the early thirties of the 16th century, a fact brought home to us by the accounts of the protracted Ahom-Muslim conflicts of this period furnished by the Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis*. Gait's interpretation of this fact (*vide* History of Assam, p. 50) is really sophistical and hardly worthy of serious consideration. With regard to the length of Nara Narayan's reign, there is no doubt that it extended till 1509 *Saka* (1587 A. D.), as all the known coins of his son Lakshmi Narayan indicate.

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commensurate with the time, energy and resources spent there on, the immediate effect was however quite dazzling. The political power and influence of the Koch kingdom might, for a time at least, be said to have extended from the Karatoya on the west to the whole of the Brahmaputra valley up to Sadiya on the east, while on the south-east it spread as far as the hilly tract of Manipur. Koch Bihar now attained its greatest political expansion.

One thing strikes us as very significant in our survey of the political geography of the growing Koch kingdom—the total abstention from any attempt at territorial extension westward. It is obviously due to the great pains which the astute monarch Nara Narayan took to avoid giving any offence to the Muhammadan power in Bengal, so as to rake up its latent spirit of hostility towards Kamarupa. Notwithstanding this fact it is easy to infer that the forward march of Koch imperialism did not fail to arouse the misgiving and ill-will of the first Kararani Sultan of Bengal, and he took the earliest opportunity to try conclusions with Koch Bihar.

It is really unfortunate that very little is known regarding the details of Sulaiman Kararani's encounter with Nara Narayan, which, in its outline at least, is a genuine historical fact.*

* A great deal of obscurity and myth has gathered round this incident which has served to confuse its real issue. The *Darrang Raj Bansabali* (pp. 97-104) and the *Purani Asama Buranji* (pp. 67-71), and following them Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam vaguely refer to a hard conflict between the Koch king Nara Narayan, aided by his brother Sila Rai (Sukladhvaj) and the *Gaur Patsha*, in which the former appears as the aggressor with the inevitable corollary that the scene of action is laid in the territory of the latter, who, however, is depicted as having ultimately got the better of his antagonist. Reading between the lines of the detailed story, replete with palpable absurdities and gross flattery of the Koch royal house, it is not difficult to see that it represents only the native version of Sulaiman Kararani's encounter with the Koches, which is referred to in the *Akbarnamah* of Abul Fazl, and that, shorn of its inconsistencies, it would agree in substance with its Persian counterpart.

The chronological agreement between the two accounts and their unanimity with regard to the result on the one hand, and the mass of local tradition in Assam centring round Kalapahar as the great destroyer of Hindu

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Conflict between the Bengal ruler and the Koch Bihar king (1567-68 A. D.).

It was some time in 1567-68 A. D.,* immediately after the subjugation of Orissa, that the Afghan Sultan, with the redoubtable Brahmin renegade and iconoclast Kalapahar as his able lieutenant, led a daring attack against Koch Bihar, then in the hey-day of its glory and prosperity under king Nara Narayan. Fired with the proverbial zeal of a new convert, Kalapahar carried all before him and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Koch host commanded

temples and images on the other hand, lead me to suggest that there can hardly be any mistake with regard to the identification. In view of the inevitable tendency of the Koch chronicles to exaggerate the achievements of their heroes and at the same time to minimise, palliate or omit altogether their failures and shortcomings, it does not appear to be difficult to explain away the discrepancies. It was quite natural on the part of the native chroniclers to keep up the brilliant and even tenour of the narrative of Nara Narayan's martial exploits by portraying his conflict with the Bengal Sultan as an aggressive venture, though in reality it was just the contrary according to the contemporary testimony of Abul Fazl. The chroniclers had however the candour to admit its failure, but they made flagrant attempts to gloss it over by the introduction of a snake-bite story as well as of an exceedingly improbable compromise episode, which, on the face of it, is unworthy of credence.

* This is the date proposed by the author of the *Riyaz* and it appears most probable, although Stewart suggests 1569 A. D. Abul Fazl and the Koch chroniclers give no dates. Robinson would place Kalapahar's invasion between 1550 and 1560 A. D., while Gunabhiram Barua advocates 1553 A. D. These early dates may easily be rejected on the ground that Sulaiman Kararani, whose general Kalapahar was, flourished in Bengal only between 1563 and 1570 A.D., and so his Koch campaign must have occurred subsequent to the year 1563. The inscription of Sukladhvaj in the temple of Kamakhya seems, on the other hand, to suggest that the campaign took place sometime prior to 1477 *Saka* (1565 A.D.), for it records the building (rather rebuilding) of the temple in that year. There is nothing however in the inscription to indicate that the temple was rebuilt consequent on its destruction by the Muhammadan general Kalapahar, and the *Bansabali*, which refers to the destruction of the temple but vaguely, attributes it to the *Bangals* (Muhammadans) and does not specifically refer to Kalapahar. Though the great volume of popular tradition clearly points to the Muhammadan general's iconoclasm in Kamarupa and thus supports the conclusion reached from the epigraphic sources regarding the date of the campaign, the evidence of the *Riyaz* and Stewart's book is so circumstantial that in the absence of further light it is impossible to gainsay it.

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by Sukladhvaj, and thus sullied the latter's unbroken martial record. Plunder and rapine being the main aim of the Muhammadan general, there was no attempt at a permanent conquest of the Koch realm. After a vain attempt to carry the capital by storm, the Bengal Sultan proceeded up the Brahmaputra as far as Tezpur, only to wend its way back, alarmed at the news of the recrudescence of trouble in the newly conquered tract of Orissa.

Its upshot.

As nothing was more gratifying to the fanatical zeal of Kalapahar than the desecration of the chief objects of Hindu worship, the sacred images in the shrines of Kamakhya, Hajo and other places felt the impact of his iconoclastic fury, and their ruin was the only tangible result of his triumphant military razzia. Not an inch of territory was acquired, nor was any promise of tribute exacted from the vanquished Koch king, so that to all intents and purposes, the meteoric campaign of Sulaiman Kararani was a failure and was recognised as such even by his contemporaries.* The Koch ruler raised his head high as soon as the storm of foreign invasion was over, and all traces of it quickly disappeared.

And real importance.

However transient might have been the effect of Sulaiman's Koch campaign, it deserves more than a passing notice, for, it was the last passage of arms of the Muhammadans with Kamarupa, prior to the advent of the Mughals. In less than ten years of Sulaiman's Koch enterprise, the Mughals conquered Bengal, and with their appearance, a new era dawned in the history of Muhammadan relation with Kamarupa, or rather with its residuary legatee, Koch Bihar. The traditional attitude of unrelenting hostility is given up, and one of peace and amity appears in its place.

Before I pass on to the new phase of policy it behoves me to

* The *Akbarnamah*, Vol. III. p. 1068, says :—"The ruler of Koch did not pay his respects to the *Hakim* of Bengal, and Sulaiman Kararani proceeded to make war upon him and returned after failure".

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take stock of the numerous conflicts waged by the Muhammadans against Kamarupa since the beginning of the thirteenth century, and appraise their net results.* With only a few exceptions, such as the enterprises of Ikhtiyaru-d din Yuz-buk-i Tughril Khan and of Alau-d din Husain Shah, the Muhammadan invasions of Kamarupa were mostly mere plundering excursions—the inevitable resultant of a spirit of daring adventure, material greed and religious frenzy. They were therefore transitory in their duration and barren of solid result. These may well be compared to summer thunderstorms, rapid in their sequence and terrific in their nature, but fruitless of beneficial or permanent effects. A period of more than three centuries and a half of intermittent warfare failed to make any lasting impression upon the north-east frontier of Medieval India, where after various political changes, some enterprising Mongoloid tribes ultimately emerged into prominence and laid the basis of several independent principalities which they continued to rule in absolute defiance of the neighbouring Muhammadan power.

Ultimate result of the numerous Muhammadan attacks on Kamarupa.

It was reserved for the Mughals to give a new turn to the history of these Mongoloid states and to dominate over them, for good or evil, with varying fortunes, for more than a century. The story of Mughal contact with these frontier kingdoms forms the main theme of this work.

Before I take it up I propose to give a brief review of the Muhammadan relation with the most easterly and undoubtedly the most powerful of the Mongoloid states, i. e., Assam, prior to the advent of the Mughals, so as to bring the whole narrative in one line.

* It may be pointed out in passing that no systematic and comprehensive account of these Muhammadan invasions has as yet been published. Gait's endeavour (JASB, 1893, pp. 278-81, and History of Assam, pp. 36-45) to cover the ground is too sketchy and leaves much room for improvement. Notwithstanding the paucity of material for this topic, a more thorough use of the literary, numismatic, epigraphic and monumental sources extant may be made with profit, and this has been attempted in this chapter.

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Section II. Muslim Relation with Assam prior to the advent of the Mughals.

The early history of Assam proper is indissolubly connected with that of the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa, in which at least the greater part of it was for a long time included. The appearance of a race of Shans—the Ahoms, in the thirteenth century, marked the beginning of a new chapter in the annals of Assam. Under the Ahoms, Assam history followed an honourable and independent course. The foreigners, by their energy and ability, gradually extended their power westward and laid the basis of a strong monarchy which lasted for about six centuries. They were destined to set a limit to the eastward expansion of the dominion of the Kamarupa kings as well as of the early Muhammadan sovereigns of Bengal and their Mughal successors.

Advent of the Ahoms in Assam.

For about a century after the entrance into their new home, the Ahoms were busy setting it in order by subjugating the Morans, the Borahis, and the Nagas in the vicinity. It is only in the reign of Sukhangpha (1293-1332 A.D.) that we first hear of hostilities between the Ahom king and the Kamata Raja. The latter must have, by this time, subjugated the domains of the Bhuiyas and thus found himself in close quarters with the former. Henceforward the *Buranjis* frequently contain references to the contact, sometimes friendly but more often hostile, between the Ahom and the Kamata monarchs. Their frequent quarrels offered many a opportunity to the neighbouring Muhammadan sovereigns of Bengal for indulging in filibustering expeditions against them.

Their relation with Kamarupa.

The brunt of the attack was however borne by the kingdom of Kamarupa, on account of its immediate contiguity to Bengal. Apart from the peculiar physical features and the climatic conditions of Assam, the crude habits and manners of the

And with Muhammadan Bengal.

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people and their geographical aloofness from Bengal secured for them (as has already been suggested) an immunity from Muslim attack for a long time. It was only after the subjugation of Kamarupa and the mastery of the lower Brahmaputra valley that an invasion of the Ahom realm was feasible.

Hence we find that the contact between the early Muhammadans and the Ahoms is few and far between. The earliest mention of an invasion of Assam occurs in the *Alamgirnamah*. The author tells us that Muhammad bin-Tughlak invaded Assam in 1337 A. D., but his whole army perished in no time in that enchanted land. In the preceding section I have already discussed this alleged Assam venture of the Delhi Emperor,* and I need not repeat my view that the Tughlak sovereign stopped probably at the Bar Nadi region and did not enter Assam proper at all.

Muhammad bin Tughlak's Assam venture.

The next reference to the contact of Medieval Bengal with Assam strikes a new note. The table appears to have been turned, and it is said that during the reign of Raja Kans and his son (*c.* 1407-1431 A. D), the Assamese under king Sudangpha conquered north-eastern Bengal as far as the Karatoya.† Unfortunately it is not possible to place much reliance on this invasion of Sudangpha, whose regnal years, according to the testimony of the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the Assam *Buranji* of Gunabhiram Barua, are 1397- 1407 A.D., and thus do not quite fit in with this incident. As there is no corroborative evidence, there need not be any hesitation in agreeing with the view put forward by Mr. Gait ‡ that it probably refers to a dispute between king Sudangpha and the Kamata ruler. It has thus no connection with the Ahom-Muslim history of this period.

Sudangpha's invasion of Bengal—its authenticity questioned.

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* See p. 61 footnote.

† JASB, 1873, p. 235.

‡ History of Assam, p. 84 footnote.

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Alau-d din Husain Shah's Assam expedition.

The first encounter of Medieval Bengal with the Ahom state occurred during the closing years of the fifteenth century, when Alau-d din Husain Shah was the reigning sovereign in the former, and Suhenpha in the latter realm. A considerable amount of confusion and obscurity, however, surrounds this interesting episode, from which it is very difficult to find the truth. While the Muhammadan chroniclers of Aurangzib's reign give almost a colourless account, reading in the event only a rehearsal of Mir Jumla's tragic venture in Assam, copious details are to be found in the Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis*. But the bewildering context in which they occur has led modern historians, not without some reason, to doubt their relevancy with regard to Husain Shah's campaign altogether.* The trouble is intensified by the curious fact that though the numerous coins and inscriptions of that monarch dub him as the conqueror of *Kamru* and *Kamta*, they are entirely silent with regard to his Assam expedition.

* The *Alamgirnamah*, p. 731, says :—"Formerly Husain Shah, a king of Bengal, undertook an expedition against Assam, and carried with him a formidable force in cavalry, infantry and boats. The beginning of this invasion was crowned with victory. He entered the country, and erected the standard of superiority and conquest. The Rajah, being unable to encounter him in the field, evacuated the plains and retreated to the mountains. Husain left his son with a large army to keep possession of the country, and returned to Bengal. The rainy season commenced, and the roads were closed by the inundation. The Rajah descended from the mountains, surrounded the Bengal army, skirmished with them, and cut off their provisions till they were reduced to such straits that they were all, in a short time, either killed or made prisoners". The *Fathiya* (JBORS, Vol I. p. 179) gives almost an idential account which need not be repeated. Reading between the lines of the *Alamgirnamah* and the *Fathiya*, one cannot help concluding that their authors read in Husain Shah's Assam campaign only a parody of the gigantic enterprise of Mir Jumla. They accordingly attribute to the former, probably in the absence of any trustworthy account, the same initial success, followed by the same tragic end brought about in a similar fashion as overtook the latter, and so they are entirely silent with regard to the date and other necessary points.

The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*, which contains, by far, the most exhaustive as well as authoritative account of the Muhammadan warfare

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Its historicity.

Notwithstanding the cloud of vagueness and uncertainty which has enveloped the Assam campaign of Alau-d din Husain Shah, there appears no reason to doubt that it was the inevitable supplement to the Bengal Sultan's brilliant conquest of Kamarupa and really came in its wake. We have already remarked that soon after the conquest of Kamarupa up to the Bar Nadi region, Husain Shah projected a daring attack upon the neighbouring realm of Assam. The moment was quite opportune. The reigning king Suhenpha had long been engaged in a protracted struggle with the Kacharis and was ill-fitted to withstand a foreign invasion.

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in Assam, gives us, on the other hand, a detailed narrative of the first conflict. But its cumbrous textual condition has given rise to so much trouble regarding the period to which it should be referred that Mr. Gait (History of Assam, pp. 90-91, footnote) is inclined to believe that "the first Muhammadan invasion recorded in Ahom history occurred in 1527," that is, at least eight years after Sultan Husain Shah's demise. This means that in his opinion Husain's Assam campaign is a myth, and this view is upheld by Mr. Stapleton (JASB, 1910, pp. 156-57). Mr. Gait has obviously framed his conclusion primarily on the fact that in the *Ahom Buranji* the account of the warfare waged by "the Great Vizier of the down country" (Bengal) appears in course of the narrative of the reign of the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.), and that it has been dated by the English translator (of that *Buranji*) subsequent to the Chutia revolt of the year 1527. The striking absence of any reference to the Assam campaign in the numerous coins and inscriptions of Husain Shah has strengthened Gait's theory that "there were in reality two separate expeditions, the one against Kamata in 1498, and the other against the Ahoms some twenty (thirty ?) years later."

I beg to differ from the learned author of the History of Assam and suggest that the Kamata and Assam campaigns were successive in time, the second one being a supplement and a corollary to the first. Mr. Gait seems to have laid undue stress on the account of the *Ahom Buranji*, which in its earlier stages is really confused and misleading. It consists of isolated statements in no strict chronological setting. This has been brought home to me by a perusal of the same MS. translation used by Gait. One instance would suffice. In Chapter V, a reference to the conquests of Sukapha, the first Ahom King, appears just after a passage containing some information regarding the reign of Susenpha, the 11th monarch. Though it cannot be denied that the invasion of the "Great Vizier" is recorded in connection with the reign of the Dihingia

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A vast army of 20,000 infantry and cavalry was got ready and numerous war-boats were fitted up for the expedition, which appears to have been placed under the joint command of one "Bit Malik" or "Mit Manik," and the "Great Vizier". While the identity of the former remains a mystery, that of the latter appears fairly certain. He is one Ruknu-d din Rukn Khan, who was, according to his own inscriptions, the wazir and general of Alau-d din Husain Shah and took a prominent part in the imperial conquests of his master.

Origin of the expedition.

The Muhammadan host had a plane sailing at the outset. It proceeded without any serious opposition up the Brahmaputra as far as the eastern limits of the modern Darrang District, and soon reached the banks of the Burai river. The Ahom king now girded up his loins for a vigorous encounter with

Its initial success.

Raja, it might rather be taken as one more instance of the faulty chronology and the cumbrous style which characterise the opening sections of the work. That the *Ahom Buranji's* narrative of the first Muslim conflict with the Ahoms is defective and should be dated prior to the time of the Dihingia Raja (before 1497 A. D.) is confirmed by the references to the same incident in the *Purani Assam Buranji* and in Dr. Wade's History of Assam. These make it clear by their clumsy reference to "Khunphang" or "Khuphang" of "Bengal" (apparently a variant of Husain of Bengal) that the hero of the whole piece was Sultan Alau-d din Husain Shah. The testimony of the Persian chronicles stamps the Assam campaign as a historic fact, and the agreement, in substance at least, between them and the Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis* further confirms it. Both the versions concur that the Bengal army attained initial success but was ultimately routed with great loss, so that it is hardly possible to doubt that they refer to the same incident.

Perhaps the most conclusive evidence regarding the historicity of Husain Shah's Assam war is furnished by an almost contemporary inscription (dated 918 A. H.—1512 A. D., and commemorative of the erection of a building) discovered at Sylhet (*vide* Dacca Review, August 1913, pp. 154-56 ; JASB 1922, pp. 413, 44), which reveals the identity of the "Great Vizier" of the *Buranjis* as the vizier and general of Alau-d din Husain Shah, named Ruknu-d din Rukn Khan. He tells us in his inscription that being "the wazir and general for many months at the time of the conquest of Kamru, Kamta, Jaznagar and Urisha, (he) served in the army in several places in the train of the king (Husain Shah)".

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the Muslims. A decisive naval fight took place at Temeni, in which the latter seem to have attained initial success. But they were ultimately severely defeated and the "Great Vizier" sought safety in a hasty flight.*

But ultimate failure.

A lull in the warfare ensued. The victorious Ahom monarch utilised the respite in strengthening his defences. Fortified posts were set up at Singri, Sala and at the mouth of the Bharali river and were garrisoned strongly under the leading Ahom commanders.

The last phase of the struggle was brought on by a renewed advance of the Bengal army under "Mit Manik" and the "Great Vizier" into the Ahom domain. By land and water it proceeded up to Singri and attacked the outpost there, under the charge of the Barpatra Gohain. After a bloody encounter, the Ahom

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That Rukn Khan was the vizier and cammander-in-chief of the Bengal Sultan is confirmed by two of his other inscriptions, one undated, and the other dated (918 A.H., JASB, 1870, p. 234) and that he served in Assam as well, as he professes to have done in Kamarupa and other places may easily be inferred from the veiled and vague reference to it as "several places" in the Sylhet inscription. As the authorities agree that the Bengal army had to beat an inglorious retreat from Assam, it is extremely unlikely that its commander should mention the scene of his ignominy in an inscription set up to perpetuate his name and fame. A similar reason holds good in case of the Bengal Sultan also, and it serves to explain the omission of all mention of the tragic Assam venture in his numerous coins and inscriptions.

Thus in view of the evidence of the Persian works and my interpretation of the analogous account of the native *Buranjis*, supported by the authority of the Sylhet inscription of Rukn Khan as well as the peculiar political circumstances of the closing years of the 15th century in Bengal and Assam, I have no hesitation in suggesting that Assam was unsuccessfully invaded by Alau-d din Hosain Shah soon after the conquest of Kamarupa, probably in 1493, at least, earlier than 1497 A. D., the first regnal year of the Dihingia Raja. There appears to be nothing inconsistent or improbable in the account of the *Rigaz* and no exception can possibly be taken to it or to the accounts of Dr. Wade and B. Hamilton (though they are more or less modern compilations, all of which seem to suggest that two separate campaigns, successive in time, were launched by the Bengal Sultan.

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 57.

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commander got the better of the enemy. "Mit Manik" with the greater part of his troops fell in battle, while a large number of the men were taken prisoner. The discomfited "Great Vizier," with a handful of his followers, made good his escape. The victorious Assamese pursued the fugitives hard up to Khagarijan (Nowgong District) and then returned with a rich booty.*

Thus the Assam war of Alau-d din Husain Shah came to a miserable end. It was almost an unmitigated disaster, and it must have been greatly detrimental to its sponsor's military prestige and political power. The bitter lesson learnt was not lost upon the Bengal Sultan, who imbibed a natural horror for Assam as the land of witchcraft and magic and wisely refrained from attempting to retrieve the discomfiture sustained there. This explains why there was no more conflict with Assam during his life-time.

And its disastrous consequences.

After the death of Alau-d din Husain Shah, his son Nasrat succeeded him. The new sovereign was greatly preoccupied with political complications nearer home and had neither the time nor the energy to repeat his father's aggressive venture in Assam. It was however at the end of his reign that the bustle of war was again heard in that quarter after a silence of more than thirty years.

Lull in Ahom-Muslim conflict for more than thirty years.

The circumstances leading to the resumption of hostilities are an interesting study. As I have already remarked, Muhammadan authority and influence in Kamarupa continued to flourish even after the failure of the Assam raid, the reason for which is primarily to be sought in the peculiar political condition of the north-east. The Koch power had not yet grown up there, while the Ahom king (Dihingia Raja) was too much engrossed in putting down internal

Resumption of warfare—its reasons.

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai : Purani Asama Buranji* p. 58 : Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam.

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rebellions engendered by the weak policy of his two immediate predecessors to think of expelling the discomfited foreigners from his neighbourhood.

The Koch king Biswa Singh's rapid rise to power however soon put the Muhammadans in Kamarupa for a time on their mettle. A strenuous attempt was made by them to create a new sphere of authority at the expense of the Ahom domain, which lay to the east of the Bar Nadi. The time was quite opportune. No sooner had the Chutias and the Nagas been subdued than the Assam king was involved in a long and bloody warfare with the Kacharis which greatly taxed his resources in men and money. So he was ill-fitted to face a foreign invasion at that juncture.

And its peculiar traits.

The second phase of the Muhammadan warfare in Assam now opens in. It was novel in one sense. On account of the troublous stateof affairs in Bengal, the two immediate successors of Sultan Nasrat Shah were quite powerless either to organise campaigns themselves or to aid the Muhammadans in Kamarupa in their conflict with the Ahom king. So the hostilities launched by the local Muhammadan chieftains had to be carried on by themselves without any help or advice from the official head-quarters.

Its details—Ahom defeat near Singri.

It is really unfortunate that contemporary or even non-contemporary Persian chroniclers are entirely silent with regard to this unofficial warfare, and the Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis* are our sole authorities on the point.* From them we learn that in April, 1532, a Muhammadan commander (styled by the generic name of "Turbak") advanced upon the Ahom kingdom, at the head of 30 elephants and 1000 horse and with a large pack of artillery. After capturing the fort of Temeni

* The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* gives the most exhaustive account of the warfare. The *Purani Asama Buranji* and the other *Buranjis* I have come across, treat it very scrappily. So I have mainly relied on the Ahom *Buranji*. As I have not noted down the pagings of the MS. translation of that work, I have to content myself only with a general reference to it.

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unopposed, the Muhammadan army encamped facing the Ahom stronghold of Singri, which was held by the Bar Patra Gohain. Anxious for its safety, the Ahom king sent strong reinforcements to Singri under his son, Suklen. Skirmishes soon commenced and these continued for some time. Eager to come to a decisive issue, the Ahom prince then crossed the river Brahmaputra and led a vigorous assault on the enemy camp, in spite of the fact that the omens divined by the Deodhais had been unfavourable. A sharp struggle ensued in which the Muhammadans were hard pressed for a time, but they at last prevailed over the Ahoms and put them to total rout. Eight of the leading officers were slain, and a great number of men were drowned, while the Ahom prince himself was wounded and had a narrow escape. The shattered remnants of the army retired to Sala, where they were rallied by the Ahom king for a fresh encounter and placed under the charge of the Bar Patra Gohain.

Master of Singri, the Muhammadans crossed the Brahmaputra into *Dakhinkol* and reached Kaliabar, where they halted for the rains, during which hostilities were suspended. At last in October, 1532, they came back to *Uttarkol* and moved to Gheeladhari (north-west of Bishnath, in the modern Darrang District). Alarmed at the northerly advance of the enemy, the Ahom king threw strong entrenchments to guard the mouth of the Burai river. But the Muhammadans readily changed their plan, moved to the south bank of the Brahmaputra, and laid siege to the fort of Sala. The houses outside the Ahom stronghold were burnt down, and a fierce attempt to carry it by storm was only thwarted by the resourceful commandant who poured down hot water upon the assailants. Light skirmishes then followed for about two months at the end of which an important engagement was fought on land, in the vicinity of Sala, in which the Ahoms with 400 elephants were pitted against the Muhammadan cavalry and gunners. The Muhammadans defeated the Ahoms and compelled them to

Muslim attempts on Sala.

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seek refuge in their fort (*c.* February, 1533). Nothing noteworthy happened until the middle of March, when a combined attack by land and water was made by the Muhammadans upon the Sala fort. For three days and nights a furious struggle raged, but the Ahom stronghold could not be captured.

Ahom naval success at Duimunisila.

The fortune of war now changed decidedly in favour of the Ahoms. In a battle which ensued near the mouth of the Burai river, the Muhammadan navy was worsted. This was followed by another assault on Sala, which was equally fruitless. Soon after this, the first serious naval reverse was suffered by the Muhammadans at Duimunisila, where an admiral, with 2500 men, was killed and 20 of his ships were captured.

The arrival of strong reinforcements at this juncture, under one Husain Khan, raised the drooping spirit of the Muhammadans and gave a new lease of life to the warfare. In the middle of May, 1533, the Muhammadan navy advanced beyond Tezpur and halted at the mouth of the Dikrai river. Opposite to it were entrenched the Ahoms with a strong fleet. For two months and a half, the belligerents lay facing one another without any effective action. At last (August, 1533) the Ahoms began hostilities by making a stockade near the Muhammadan camp with a view to take it by assault. A serious encounter soon took place on the bank of the Dikrai in which the enemy fleet was thoroughly defeated. A great number of the Muhammadans perished in water, while those who escaped sought shelter in the bogs and morasses near by, only to be hunted down by their vigilant pursuers.

Other victories near the Dikrai.

The last stage in the struggle was now reached. In September (1533), Husain Khan with his cavalry led a desperate charge against the Ahom army near the Bharali river. He was killed and his forces soon melted away. An immense booty including 28 elephants, 850 horses, one box of gold and 80 bags of silver, besides numerous guns, was secured by the Ahoms.

And the Bharali river.

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Thus for about a year and a half (April, 1532—September, 1533) the Muhammadans in Kamarupa, bereft of any help from the Bengal government, carried on a persistent struggle to occupy the territories now covered by the Darrang and Nowgong Districts, from the hands of the Ahom king. Though for a time, fortune smiled upon them, they were ultimately defeated with heavy loss. It was a fateful war and it sounded the beginning of the end. Pressed hard by the Ahoms on the east and the growing Koch power on the west, the Muhammadans were soon compelled to give up their hold on Kamarupa altogether. The curtain fell, and the attempt of Medieval Bengal at natural expansion towards the north-east ended miserably by the early thirties of the sixteenth century.

Their significance—disappearance of Muhammadan influence from Kamarupa.

With the disappearance of Muhammadan authority from its immediate neighbourhood, Assam heaved a sigh of relief. It had stood the shock of Alau-d din Ḥusain Shah's invasion as well as of other local attacks quite well, and for more than three-quarters of a century, it was left to pursue its career of independent development undeterred by any fear of foreign aggression.

Assam after the Muhammadan wars.

During this long period the history of India is crowded with new figures and rapidly moving scenes. It attains at last some sort of unity under the Mughals. Their conquest of Bengal in the last quarter of the sixteenth century and the gradual spread of their influence and authority in its north-east ultimately paved the way for the contact with Assam. On account of its geographical remoteness and political isolation from Bengal, Assam was however the last Mongoloid state to enter into direct relation with the Mughals and it did not feel the impact of their fury till the year 1615. The early phases of the Mughal policy in the north-east frontier concerned accordingly the sister states of Koch Bihar and Kamrup, and these form the theme of the next two chapters.

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CHAPTER III.

BEGINNINGS OF MUGHAL NORTH-EAST FRONTIER POLICY.*

Section I. Policy of Defensive Alliance with Koch Bihar (1576-1596).

Bengal on the eve of the Mughal conquest.

Bengal with its peculiar physical features, climatic condition, geographical position and political entities proved to be a thorny problem to the early Mughal sovereigns in India. It effectively eluded political subjection for the first fifty years of their rule, and it was not till fifteen years had elapsed since the accession to power of Akbar, the Great Mughal, that he turned his attention towards the conquest of the distant but rich and fertile province of Bengal to the east.

Circumstances leading to it.

By that time Sulaiman Kararani, the founder of a new Afghan royal line in Bengal, died, and was succeeded by his son Daud. While the father had rendered a lip-deep allegiance of suzerainty to the Mughal Emperor, the daring and ambitious son openly bade him defiance. Akbar had meanwhile succeeded in establishing himself on a solid basis by the suppression

* Our sources of information regarding this topic are meagre. Of the native chronicles, the *Darrang Raj Bansabali* and the *Rajopakhyan* deserve mention. The former gives a detailed account of a joint attack of Sila Rai, brother of the Koch king Nara Narayan, and Akbar's general Man Singh on the kingdom of the *Gaur Patsha* which, as we shall see later on, should rather be referred to the days of Nara Narayan's son Lakshmi Narayan. It however vaguely refers to the establishment of friendly relations between Nara Narayan and Akbar, though it deals exhaustively with his quarrels with Raghu Deb (his nephew and the heir-presumptive), leading to the division of the Koch kingdom into two parts. The account of the subsequent hostilities of Lakshmi Narayan with Raghu Deb's son Parikshit, which prepared the way for Mughal intervention in Koch politics, also finds a prominent place in the *Bansabali*. The *Rajopakhyan* is silent with regard to the relation of the Mughals with Nara Narayan, and gives a perverted version of their contact with Lakshmi

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of rivals and rebels, and had extended his sway over Gujrat as well as the whole of the northern India up to the borders of Bihar. His next desire was to put down Daud and conquer Bengal. The task was entrusted to Munim Khan and others, and it proved to be troublesome. Daud offered a stubborn resistance to the Imperial officers for about three years, but he suffered a serious reverse at the battle of Tukaroi (March, 1575). Though by the peace of Katak which soon followed, he formally renounced the sovereignty of Bengal and Bihar in favour of the Mughal Emperor and retired to Orissa, he took the earliest opportunity to break the peace-terms and invade Bihar, after the death of Munim Khan. But his days were numbered. At the battle of Akmahal (July, 1576), Daud was thoroughly defeated and captured and soon after beheaded.

Battle of Akmahal (1576).

The decisive engagement at Akmahal is a land-mark in the history of Medieval Bengal. With the disappearance of Daud, Afghan sovereignty stood abolished and the foundation of Mughal supremacy was formally laid in Bengal. The era of independence finally closed, and the history of the country was henceforward inseparably bound up with that of Mughal India of which it formed only a side-issue.

The conquest of Bengal profoundly influenced the history of Mughal India and gave rise to a new phase in its policy. By stepping into the shoes of the Afghan power, the Mughal

Narayan. The Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis* are of little value in this connection. It is only in Abul Fazl's monumental chronicle, the *Akbarnamah*, that we get a contemporary account (in Persian) of Mughal policy towards Koch Bihar in its initial stages. But the last recorded event there being the Koch-Mughal combined attack upon Isa Khan (September, 1597), we do not get any information regarding the remaining years of Akbar's rule. Amongst Bengal histories, the *Riyazu-s Salatin* (a late eighteenth century work) and Stewart's History of Bengal (an early nineteenth century compilation) make occasional references to Koch-Mughal affairs, obviously on the basis of the *Akbarnamah*. Besides these literary sources, a few coins of Nara Narayan and Lakshmi Narayan and their rival dynasts, Raghu Deb and Parikshit Narayan, enable us to ascertain their dates precisely.

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Emperor was, for the first time, brought into direct and intimate contact with the Mongoloid states which lay on the north-eastern border of Bengal. The veil of separation that so long existed between the Mughal Empire and the Koch and Ahom powers was now lifted, and the genesis of the Mughal north-eastern frontier policy was almost unwittingly laid.

Conquest of Bengal and its bearing on the history of Mughal north-east frontier policy.

As Koch Bihar* stood nearest to Bengal, it was naturally the first to come under the pale of Mughal foreign policy. It had stood the shock of Sulaiman Kararani's invasion well, and continued its independent career under Nara Narayan. The Koch king had indeed to give up his pretensions to Assam as well as to the tracts on the south and the south-east up to Manipur, but this territorial disintegration was nothing more than an abjuration of paper-suzerainty and was really a blessing in disguise. The Koch domain now became more compact and easily manageable.† In spite of

Contact of Koch Bihar with Mughal Bengal inevitable.

* A few words with regard to the nomenclature of the Koch kingdom, particularly in the Persian works, may, I hope, be not deemed out of place here. Abul Fazl invariably refers to the Koch Bihar State as "Koch"; so does Jahangir in his autobiography. Mirza Nathan, the author of the *Baharistan*, speaks of Lakshmi Narayan and Parikshit Narayan as the Rajas of "Kamta" and "Kamrup" respectively. But he often uses the term "Koch" to signify the domain of both the kings alike. Sometimes "Koch" and "Kamrup" are spoken almost in the same breath ("Koch territory, particularly Kamrup".—MS. p. 257a). Abdul Hamid Lahori, the author of the *Padishahnamah*, is the first Persian author who uses the terms "Koch Bihar" and "Kamrup" to discriminate between the two Koch states—the original one founded by Biswa Singh and the latter carved out of it by his grandson Raghu Deb.

† It is necessary at this stage to frame an idea of the area and precise boundaries of the Koch Bihar state of this period, regarding which much exaggeration has hitherto prevailed unquestioned. Mr. H. N. Chowdhury (Cooch Bihar State and its Land Revenue Settlements, p. 232) opines, obviously on the basis of the native chronicles, particularly the *Bansabali*, that "in the time of Maharaja Nara Narayan, Cooch Bihar was an extensive kingdom, and comprised in addition to the little state of Cooch Bihar of the present day,

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his territorial losses Nara Narayan remained unquestionably the strongest independent potentate in north-eastern India, holding the key to the strategic frontier of Mughal Bengal. His dominion abutted on Akbar's newly conquered province on the north and the east, and a contact between him and Akbar soon became inevitable.

In 1574, the Koch king appears to have taken the first step in establishing friendly relations with the Mughal Emperor

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almost the whole of northern Bengal, Bhutan, Assam, as well as the modern states of Kachar, Jaintia, Manipur and Tipperah, and extended up to the coast of the Bay of Bengal." This is certainly a grossly exaggerated and an exceedingly misleading statement. A critical study of the account of the numerous conquests attributed to Nara Narayan in the *Bansabali* and the *Purani Asama Buranji* leads me to suggest that they were no better than plundering raids, inspired by his love of glory and no less love of gold, and had no lasting results. The so-called vassals shook off their vassalage at the earliest possible moment, so that there was no such real territorial expansion of the Koch Bihar state as Mr. Chowdhury suggests. The testimony of Abul Fazl is conclusive on the point. He tells us (*Akbarnamah*, Vol. III. p. 1067) "Koch is a populous country : its length is 200 *kos*, and its breadth 40-100 *kos*." With regard to the precise territorial limits of Koch Bihar, Abul Fazl says,"On the east is the river Brahmaputra, on the north is lower Tibet and Assam, on the south is Ghoraghat and on the west is Tirhut." From Mirza Nathan's work we get a fair knowledge of the boundaries of Koch Bihar, which generally tally with that derived from the *Akbarnamah*. Jaipur or Jaigarh ("Joygong" of Renell's Map No. 5, about 25 miles north of the new town of Koch Bihar) appears to have been the north-eastern frontier fort of the Koch Bihar state of this period (*vide Baharistan*, p. 164b). From Stephen Cacella, a Jesuit traveller, who visited Koch Bihar in 1626-27 A. D., we learn that "Reinate" (Rangamati Joygaon in the western Duars, about 20 miles north-west of the modern subdivisional town of Alipur Duar, Dt. Jalpaiguri) was the northernmost limit of the Koch state during Lakshmi Narayan's time. Another frontier post on the north was Kanthalbari ("Cantalbary" of Rennell's Map, about 22 miles north-west of the new town of Koch Bihar). On the south the fertile regions of Bhitarband and Bahirband occupying the left bank of the river Brahmaputra which were certainly included in the Koch kingdom during Nara Narayan's reign, were seized by the Mughals in the initial stage of their Kamrup expedition (*Baharistan*, p. 111a), and Patladah in *sarkar* Ghoraghat became an Imperial frontier post. Baritalah was another outpost, but it was on the right bank of the Brahmaputra (opposite to Hatsilah, in *parganah* Karibary). To the east the Sankosh river

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by refusing asylum to the Afghan rebels, the Mankalis of Ghoraghat, who had been defeated by the Bengal officers. To make his friendly move all the more cordial, he also sent an envoy with some presents to Akbar.*

Koch friendly gesture of 1574.

In 1578, two years after the formal conquest of Bengal, Nara Narayan despatched a formal embassy to the Court of Akbar, with an adulatory letter and a quantity of choice presents for him.† The Mughal Emperor appears to have

Followed by the Koch-Mughal defensive alliance of 1578.

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was the traditional frontier of the Koch kingdom. Mirza Nathan (*Baharistan*, p. 115a) tells us that the Khonthaghat *parganah* which occupied the banks of the Sankosh river, was included in Parikshit Narayan's realm. The *Alamgirnamah* (p. 691) names the Sankosh river as the boundary of Koch Bihar, while the *Fathiya* (JASB, 1872, p. 65) refers to Pushkarpur, near Khonthaghat (Pukuripara, a village in the modern Khuntaghat *mauza*, Dt. Goalpara), as the eastern boundary of Koch Bihar. On the west, the boundary appears to have been less defined. Abul Fazl vaguely refers to Tirhut as the western limit. From the *Fathiya* (JASB, 1872, p. 65) it appears that Patganw (Patgong, about 20 miles to the west of the new town of Koch Bihar, *vide* Rennell's Map No. 5) was the western frontier of king Pran Narayan's domain.

From the above review of the boundaries of the Koch Bihar state it appears clear that the western and the southern frontiers of the Koch domain lay contiguous to the northern and the eastern limits of Mughal Bengal, and a contact between the two neighbouring states was thus certain.

* Abul Fazl does not specifically mention the incident but only hints at it by using the significant adverb *again*, in course of his reference to the Koch-Mughal alliance of 1578. The word *again* in that context presupposes the establishment, on a previous occasion, of a friendly contact between the two parties, similar to that of 1578. After the defeat and flight of Daud Kararani towards Orissa, in the autumn of 1574, his followers were chased hard by the Imperialists, and the Mankalis of Ghoraghat sought refuge in the adjoining Koch realm. (*Akbarnamah*, Vol. III. p. 170). Prudence and foresight must at that time have induced the Koch king not only to withhold asylum to the enemies of his powerful neighbour, the Mughal sovereign, but also please him otherwise with rich presents. This early friendly gesture of Nara Narayan, deemed too trivial to find definite mention in the *Akbarnamah*, greatly facilitated the conclusion of a formal alliance four years later.

† *Akbarnamah*, Vol. III. pp. 349, 1067.

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been highly gratified by this friendly gesture on the part of the Koch king, and heartily reciprocated it. A peaceful and defensive alliance, established on equal terms between Koch Bihar and Mughal India, was obviously the outcome of this mission.*

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* A good deal of misconception has gained ground regarding the import as well as the details of this event. The relevant passages of the *Akbarnamah* are as follows :—

(a) "One of the occurrences was the arrival of presents from Bengal and Koch..... . Reports from Khan Jahan arrived at court.....that the eastern provinces were tranquil. Raja Mal Gosain, zamindar of Koch, also *again* made his submission. First of all, the rarities of Bengal including 54 noted elephants were produced, and then, the presents of the landholder (Mal Gosain)."

(b) "His (Biswa Singh's) grandson (obviously a mistake for son) Mal Gosain possessed much enlightenment, and was adorned with excellent qualities. By virtue of spiritual senses he got some idea of the greatness of His Majesty, and composed an address in praise of the Shah-in-Shah, and sent it together with choice goods to the sacred court. He always gathered auspiciousness by supplications to His Majesty."

Mr. Blochmann (JASB, 1872, p. 52) gives a wrong translation of the concluding part of the first passage (see Introduction, p. 4 footnote). In his annotations to the *Ain-i-Akbari* (Vol. I. p. 331), he repeats the faulty statement which has been perpetuated, though in gist, by Mr. Gait. The latter has committed an additional blunder by quoting the authority of the *Ain-i-Akbari*, instead of the *Akbarnamah*, in his support (History of Assam, p. 55). Stewart has misconstrued the import of both the statements and has been bold enough to assert that "Khan Jahan.....compelled the Raja of Cooch Behar to pay a tribute and to acknowledge himself a vassal of the empire" (History of Bengal, p. 106).

It is indeed difficult to find out the truth hidden in the cumbrous phraseology, the gorgeous rhetoric and the gross flattery of Abul Fazl. But it may be possible to read between the lines of the *Akbarnamah* and suggest that there was no acceptance of formal supremacy of the Mughal Emperor on the part of the Koch king. The latter did not personally wait upon Akbar, but simply sent him an envoy, with an adulatory letter containing professions of friendship and goodwill, besides some presents, probably silk and musk with which his domain abounded. There is no mention of tribute, territorial concession or any other symbol of political tutelage anywhere. Abul Fazl praises the Koch king very highly and seems to place him almost on an equal footing with his hero. This would hardly have been the case if political submission

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The first phase of Mughal policy towards the north-east frontier, symbolised by the establishment of the Koch-Mughal friendly alliance of 1578, strikes a new note. The Mughals made a notable departure from the traditional policy of hostility and ill-will, prevalent in that quarter since the days of Muhammad Bakhtyar Khilji, when they entered into a pacific and an amicable relation with Koch Bihar, an offspring of the Kamarupa kingdom of old. And it meant no less radical a change in the case of the Koch state as well, which shook off its traditional prejudice against the Muhammadan power and allied itself with the Mughals at the first opportune moment.

First phase of Mughal north-east frontier policy opens.

In order to explain this bold change of attitude on both sides, we have to take into account the kaleidoscopic changes in contemporary Bengal as well as in north-eastern Indian politics.

Circumstances which facilitated it.

The removal of Daud from the political arena in Bengal had made the Mughals the *de jure* sovereign of the realm, but it took a long time before they could claim to be the *de facto* master as well. The central figure of the Afghan national opposition was indeed gone, but isolated Afghan chiefs, besides powerful Hindu zamindars, were too firmly entrenched in the soil to be rooted out without a stubborn and a protracted

Anarchic condition of Mughal Bengal.

had been accorded by the Koch ruler. Abul Fazl's faults are those of commission and seldom of omission, particularly in cases where the glorious exploits of his patron are concerned. If there was any stipulation derogatory to Nara Narayan but redounding to the credit of his Mughal ally, Abul Fazl would certainly have mentioned it—nay possibly would have dilated on it. In view of the troublous political situation in Mughal Bengal and the relatively advantageous position of the Koch Bihar state of this period, it seems improbable that there was a formal acknowledgment of political supremacy by the Koch king. A friendly alliance, as is natural between two independent neighbouring states, was now established. This simple event, dressed up in Abul Fazl's florid style, misled Stewart and he read in it an act of definite political submission.

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struggle. Mahmud Khan Khaskhail and Jamshid Khaskhail in Satgaon, Karimdad Musazai, Ibrahim Narail, Masum Kabuli, Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap in the south and the east of Bengal—all under the leadership and inspiration of Isa Khan, the chief of Bhati, were the prominent Afghan leaders who proved to be the sleepless disturbers of the Mughal peace during this period.*

Particularly of Ghoraghat.

The greatest trouble was however experienced in putting down the repeated insurrections in the Ghoraghat *sarkar*, which was the fountain of sedition and political distemper. The Afghan malcontents hit upon this frontier region in the east as the most vulnerable point in the whole province, and made it their firm stronghold. Here they could fight with the Mughals with impunity, for, in case of defeat, they were sure of a ready asylum in the neighbouring state of Koch Bihar. Sulaiman Mankali was "the acknowledged ruler of Ghoraghat", and with his son Babu Mankali and with Kalapahar, he frequently rose in revolt there.† To counteract the evil, the Turkish clan of the Qaqshals (Majnun Khan, Baba Khan,

* In the *Akbarnamah*, (Vol. III. pp. 327-28, 376-78) Abul Fazl gives us details of their rebellious activities. Further (p. 427) he tells us, "The country of Bengal is a land, where owing to climate's favouring the base, the dust of dissension is always rising. From the wickedness of men families have decayed and dominions have been ruined. Hence in old writings it was called a *Bulghakkhana* (house of turbulence)."

† The *Akbarnamah* (Vol. III. pp. 169-170, 186, 590) gives us concrete instances of the frequent Afghan insurrections in Ghoraghat. After the defeat and retreat of Daud to Orissa in 1574, Kalapahar and Babu Mankali revolted in Ghoraghat, but were put down. Taking advantage of the absence of Munim Khan in Katak (after the battle of Tukaroi, 1575), they again wrested the Ghoraghat region from the Qaqshals but failed to retain it. The experiment was repeated too often to the great detriment of the Mughal cause in that strategic frontier. The reality of the danger which threatened the Mughals is brought home to us, all the more vividly, by Abul Fazl (*Akbarnamah*, Vol. III. pp. 622, 625) according to whom the Afghans utilised the Koch state as a place of refuge (in spite of the keen vigilance of its ruler), even after the conclusion of the defensive alliance of 1578.

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Jabbari etc.,) was given *jagirs* to guard the eastern frontier, like the Warden of the Marches in Medieval England. But the fidelity of the Qaqshals sat lightly upon them. The rebel Afghans could count upon their fickleness and disloyalty, and frequently induced them to join their own ranks.*

The distracted political condition of Bengal in general, and of Ghoraghat region in particular, explains to a great extent the pacific disposition of the Mughal Emperor towards Koch Bihar. The necessity of maintaining good relations with the Koch king, in order to deprive the Afghan rebels and the disaffected Imperial officers of a safe asylum in his state, must have been clearly brought home to Akbar. In short, a friendly alliance with the person who commanded the Ghoraghat frontier appeared to him to be the only safeguard against the political insecurity and chronic anarchy that were rampant in Bengal. The personal ability, political influence and military strength of king Nara Narayan† probably soothed the self-complacency of the Mughal Emperor, and overcame his objections to treat him on an equal footing.

Solicitude of Koch king Nara Narayan for Mughal friendship.

In view of the great stakes which Akbar had in Bengal, it was in the nature of things that he should himself have taken the initiative in proposing the alliance with Nara Narayan, who occupied really a vantage-ground with regard to him. But it is curious to note that the very reverse was the case, and it was not the Mughal Emperor but the Koch king who broke the ice. The reason of this paradoxical phenomenon is to be sought partly in the innate superiority and prestige of the former as compared

* The *Akbarnamah* (Vol. III. p. 590) gives a typical instance. In the spring of 1583, Masum Kabuli rebelled and made friends with the Qaqshals, but the unnatural alliance soon broke down.

† The *Akbarnamah* (Vol. III. p. 1067) tells us, "Koch has 4,000 horse, 200,000 infantry, 700 elephants, 1,000 war-boats." In the *Ain-i-Akbari* (Vol. II. p. 117) Abul Fazl makes a more modest estimate. He says, "The chief of Koch commands 1,000 horse, 100,000 foot."

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with the latter, and partly in Nara Narayan's strained relations with the Ahom power.

Its reasons.

Notwithstanding the weak political position of Akbar in Bengal, his Imperial status, vigorous personality, unbounded ambition and brilliant military exploits dazzled the eyes of his Koch neighbour and bred in him a natural sense of inferiority and alarm. He could have hardly forgotten the time-honoured hostile policy of Muslim Bengal towards Kamarupa, and he must have been anxious to cut at the root of its renewal by extending a friendly hand to the Mughal sovereign in the hour of his great peril.

Nara Narayan's own condition was also not altogether enviable. He had inherited from his father an enmity with the Ahom state, which was ever on the increase, owing to the fact that it blocked the way of the natural expansion of the Koch kingdom to the east. The reigning Ahom monarch Sukhampha (Khora Raja) was a strong and able person, who had already retrieved his last discomfiture and freed himself from the Koch tutelage. He was always on the look-out for creating troubles for Nara Narayan by fomenting disaffection and harbouring political offenders in his realm. Under these circumstances, a friendly alliance with the rising Mughal power in Bengal appeared to the astute Koch king Nara Narayan to be a strong weapon of defence against the Ahom state.*

Thus both sides being equally anxious to solve their respective troubles with mutual help and support, the way

* The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Purani Asama Buranji* both give us detailed accounts of the prolonged warfare waged by the Koch kings Biswa Singh and Nara Narayan against the Ahoms, during the period 1545–1570 A.D. About the year 1577, three persons who had rebelled against Nara Narayan were given ready asylum in Ahom soil by king Sukhampha (Gait's History of Assam, p. 103). The relation between the Koch state and the Ahom monarchy being thus quite strained, it is quite natural that the former would be eager to cultivate friendly feelings with a rising foreign power on its border.

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was prepared for a friendly alliance between them, and this came on in 1578 A. D. It need not be emphasised that the alliance was purely defensive in nature, contracted between two sovereign states, and peace, amity and good-will were its essence.

Pursuant to the spirit of the new alliance, Nara Narayan appears to have sent his own war-boats to the help of the Mughals in 1583 A.D. In November of that year, Masum Kabuli headed a formidable rising in the vicinity of Tanda. A sharp engagement took place on the bank of the Ganges, in which the Koch navy co-operated with the war-boats of the Qaqshals in defeating Masum Kabuli, who was soon compelled to fly through Ghoraghat to Bhati.*

Koch friendly move of 1583.

About this time an event occurred, which greatly affected the history of the Koch power and also served to give a new turn to the Mughal north-east frontier policy. It is the division of the Koch Bihar state into two parts.†

Partition of Koch Bihar state.

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* In the *Akbarnamah* (Vol. III. p. 621) Abul Fazl refers to "Narain, the landholder" as having fought on behalf of the Mughals on this occasion. There is some trouble with regard to the acceptance of my suggestion that "Narain" in this connection refers to Nara Narayan, the Koch king, and not to any other friendly zamindar, the more so on account of the fact that Abul Fazl refers to Nara Narayan as "Mal Gosain" on all other occasions. I am inclined to believe that the Koch king is meant, and the prefix "Nara" is omitted owing to inadvertence or ignorance or with a view to brevity. The site of the battle, its proximity to the Koch domain on the north, the abundant naval resources of Nara Narayan, and lastly his unquestioned existence as the reigning monarch in the year 1583, all make my suggestion reasonable. I may note in passing that Ananda Nath Roy (*Baro Bhuiya*, pp. 128-29) identifies this "Narain" of Abul Fazl with Kandarpa Narayan, zamindar of Bakla. The circumstantial evidence, discussed already, makes the identification doubtful.

† A great deal of diversity of views prevails regarding the time and circumstances leading to this important event. While the author of the *Rajopakhyan* (pp. 40-41) and Hunter (Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. X. p. 351) record that Nara Narayan conferred on his younger brother, Sukladhvaj, the territories of Assam, Bijni, Darrang and Beltala, with the title of a "King," the compiler of the family history of the Rajas of Bijni (*vide* JASB, 1893, p. 294) and Dr.

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The circumstances which paved the way for it are interesting. Nara Narayan, who married at an advanced age, had previously nominated his younger brother's son Raghu Deb (the "*Patkunwar*" of Abul Fazl) as the heir-presumptive.* But the birth of a cousin (named Lakshmi Narayan) suddenly blasted the hopes of Raghu Deb, who, ambitious and enterprising as he was, decided to secede from Koch Bihar and carve out of it a separate principality for himself. He gathered round him a band of faithful followers, with whom he left the capital, proceeded eastwards, and crossing the river Manas, settled at a place named Barnagar, where he built a city called Ghilajaypur or Bijaypur. He soon found himself in a position to bid defiance to his uncle, and

Part played in it by Nara Narayan's nephew Raghu Deb.

Buchanan Hamilton (quoted in Martin's Eastern India, Vol. III. pp. 415-16) tell us that it was Biswa Singh who divided his domain between his sons Nara Narayan and Sukladhvaj. Both the suggestions are untenable as they militate against the literary, numismatic and epigraphic evidences extant. The detailed account of the *Darrang Raj Bansabali* (pp. 119-31), supported by the *Purani Asama Buranji*, and followed by Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam, and Gunabhiram Barua's Assam *Buranji*, seems to be more worthy of credence, and I have accepted it without reserve. As Gait (JASB, 1893, pp. 294-96) has ably pointed out, the evidence of the *Bansabali*, according to which Raghu Deb's successful revolt against his uncle, Nara Narayan, was the motive power for the partition of the Koch kingdom, is "so circumstantial that it is impossible to gainsay it." The voluntary division of the Koch domain, attributed to Nara Narayan, was, to all intents and purposes, the acknowledgment of an accomplished fact. The introduction of the story of a battalion of wives, sent by Raghu Deb to disarm his uncle, and the latter's chivalrous abstention from warfare, followed by a generous compromise entailing a territorial adjustment, is obviously the outcome of a natural desire on the part of the royal panegyrist, to palliate the humiliating discomfiture of the mighty ancestor of his patron.

As regards the time of the event, the *Bansabali* is silent, but Gunabhiram Barua sugests 1503 *Saka* (1581 A. D.), and Gait (History of Assam, p. 56) accepts it. It seems to be reasonable, especially in view of the fact that the inscription of Raghu Deb in the temple of Hayagriva Madhava at Hajo records that in 1505 *Saka* (1583 A. D.) he was already "Lord of Kamarupa."

* *Akbarnamah* Vol. III. p. 1067.

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taking advantage of a heavy flood, attacked the south-eastern skirts of his realm (Bahirband region).

All attempts, at first peaceful and afterwards hostile, on the part of the Koch king, to put down his rebellious nephew having failed, he thought it expedient to seal the latter's aggressive act with the stamp of approval and accept it as a *fait accompli*. A compromise was soon effected by which Lakshmi Narayan was to inherit the region west of the river Sankosh, while the land to the east of it was allotted to Raghu Deb.* Thus was laid the genesis of a new seat of Koch political authority, generally known as Kamrup.

Origin of the separate principalities of Koch Bihar and Kamrup.

The partition of territories not only diminished the moral prestige and the material prosperity of the Koch state but also gave rise to an inevitable jealousy and ill-will between the two branches, which was fraught with far-reaching consequences. Sorely beset with hostilities and dissensions, the weaker state (Koch Bihar) was compelled to court Mughal help, at the cost of its own independent status. The stronger one also sought allies. The way for foreign intervention in the Koch politics was thus prepared, and its inevitable baneful effect was not slow to be felt. The enmity between the rival parties gradually became bitter and bitter till they wore themselves out and fell victims to the aggressive policy of the Mughals.

Its far-reaching effects.

The evil was however postponed during the life-time of the

* *Darrang Raj Bansabali*, pp. 119-31. Gait (History of Assam, p. 56) makes Raghu Deb agree "to pay tribute, and acknowledge his uncle as his overlord and to strike coins only in the latter's name." It hardly seems probable. It is indeed true that Raghu did not assume sovereign power till after the death of Nara Narayan, but there is no suggestion with regard to the payment of tribute and acknowledgment of vassalage on his part, either in the *Bansabali* or in the *Buranjis* consulted by me. In view of the peculiar circumstances under which Nara Narayan was forced to concede to Raghu Deb a part of his domain and thereby make the best of a bad bargain, the abject concessions alleged to have been made by the latter to the former—the really vanquished party, appears to be quite unnatural and incredible.

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Koch Bihar king. Though Raghu Deb had definitely broken off with Nara Narayan, he appears to have desisted from bidding him open defiance or waging any more war against him, during the remaining years of his reign. But the humiliation of the Koch king had already been great. He did not long survive it* and died in 1587 A. D.†

Death of Nara Narayan (1587).

* It is necessary to note here that in connection with the events of the year 1584 (30th regnal year of Akbar), Abul Fazl (*Akbarnamah*, Vol. III. pp. 649-50) refers to Isa Khan's invasion of Koch realm, but does not name his antagonist. Apparently he was either Nara Narayan or his nephew Raghu Deb.

Gait (History of Assam, p. 62) opines that Isa's opponent was Raghu Deb. This appears to be untenable. The *Baharistan* makes it clear that the Kamrup state did not extend beyond Salconaw (opposite to Hatsilah, in the Kari Bary hills) on the south, while the *Bansabali* seems to suggest that even Bahirband, further to the north of the Kari Bary region, was outside the the new kingdom. It may thus be safely asserted that Raghu's domain did not extend southwards as far as Jangalbari—the scene of the warfare, according to the unanimous testimony of local tradition, and of the family history of the Aitches of Jasodal as well as that of Isa Khan's descendants at Jangalbari, so that Isa could have no scope for attacking the territory of Raghu Deb even if he had wished it. That he had no such desire but had, on the other hand, every reason to placate Raghu Deb seems to be more probable, in view of their common animosity against the Mughal Emperor, the sworn enemy of Isa and the best friend of Raghu's bitter rival.

The probability of the other alternative may as well be questioned. Though Isa Khan must have been looking askance at the growing solidarity of the Koch-Mughal friendship, he, whose ripe judgment has been extolled even by Abul Fazl, was not likely to launch into direct hostility against the powerful state of Koch Bihar, at a time when the Mughals had been knocking at his door. Again, as we have already suggested (see p. 95 footnote), the territorial jurisdiction of Nara Narayan did not extend actually as far south as the Jangalbari region, though Koch political influence might have permeated there. Isa's opponent was probably a local Koch chieftain, named Lakshman or Lakshman Hajo (*vide* JASB, 1910, p. 152, and Kedarnath Majumdar's History of Mymensingh, p. 55) who still owed allegiance to Nara Narayan. Abul Fazl tells us that Isa returned from "Koch" with a large and well-equipped army. His campaign must have ended in a success, as local tradition and the histories of Jasodal and Jangalbari families seem to suggest.

† Gait (History of Assam, p. 57) records the date of Nara Narayan's death as 1584 A. D., on the authority of Prasiddha Narayan's *Bansabali* and

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Its effect on Koch Bihar history.

The death of Nara Narayan closes the most glorious era in Koch Bihar history. By his judicious, benevolent and tolerant rule, he raised his country to the zenith of its prosperity, happiness and culture, and earned from posterity undying fame.

Nara Narayan's foreign policy.

His wise foreign policy was however the most distinctive feature of his reign. His far-sightedness led him to cultivate friendly relations with Akbar, soon after the conquest of Bengal, and an honourable alliance, based on mutual interests and reciprocal help, was concluded on terms of perfect equality. It is indeed surprising to note that Akbar, in the hey-day of his power, should suffer the independent existence of a small semi-civilised state in the north-east frontier of his empire, and, what is more astonishing, should accept its friendship and continue it in good faith. But this is exactly what happened.

Gradual transformation of the Koch-Mughal alliance.

So long as Nara Narayan was alive, the Koch-Mughal alliance worked well. But his death introduced grave political complications. The disruptive elements, which had so long been kept in check, now burst out in all their fury, seriously weakening the position of the Koch king and adversely affecting his relations with the Mughal

Gunabhiram Barua's Assam *Buranji*. In a footnote (p. 57) he suggests, however, that the dates on the coins of Lakshmi Narayan and Raghu Deb (1587 and 1588 A.D. respectively) "afford good grounds for thinking that the correct date (of Nara Narayan's death) may be three years later." This surmise is really correct. Numismatic testimony, in the light of the time-honoured custom of the Koch coinage (see p. 76 footnote), apparently unknown to Gait, offers conclusive evidence on the point. All the eleven coins, so far discovered, of Lakshmi Narayan (excluding the two referred to by Mr. Marsden in the *Numismata Orientalia Illustrata*, the dates of which are rather disputable) are dated 1509 *Saka*—1587 A.D. (*vide* JASB, 1895, pp. 238, 241 : ASB, Proceedings, 1893, p. 146 : Arunodai, an Assamese magazine, March, 1859 : JASB, 1910, p. 158 : Catalogue of the Shillong Provincial Coin Cabinet, pp. 200-01, and its Supplement, p. 210-11). And this being undoubtedly the date of Lakshmi Narayan's accession to the throne, Nara Narayan's death must have taken place by that time.

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power. An alliance between the weak and the strong cannot last long, and Mughal attitude towards Koch Bihar gradually turned from bad to worse. The inevitable change did not however occur till seven years had elapsed after Nara Narayan's death, so that the first and the most honourable phase of Mughal north-east frontier policy may roughly be said to have lasted about two decades (1576-1596).

Section II. Policy of Subordinate Alliance towards Koch Bihar (1596-1608).

The most important factors which paved the way for the new Mughal policy of subordinate alliance with regard to Koch Bihar were the character and attainments of Lakshmi Narayan, the son and successor of Nara Narayan, who had come to power in 1587 A. D.

Lakshmi Narayan's accession to the Koch throne (1587 A. D.).

He appears to have inherited very few of the brilliant kingly qualities of his father. He lacked his energy and vigour, his wisdom and tact, his far-sighted vision and diplomatic skill. Nor was he fortunate like him in securing a gifted brother to fight battles and win laurels on his behalf. Personal bravery and ability he possessed, but he would not use them except under pressing necessity. He was incapable of sustained endeavour and would prefer to follow the line of least resistance. A strain of feminine weakness and indolence and sloth ran through his whole being, and he was intensely fond of the society of women.*

His character.

* It is curious to note that the *Bansabali*, which is full of fulsome eulogies of Nara Narayan and Sukladhvaj, has not a word of commendation for Lakshmi Narayan. The *Rajopakhyan*, otherwise replete with exaggerated estimate of the Koch rulers, strikes a disparaging note (p. 43) with regard to him. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, however, gives us some idea of the brighter side of his nature. That he was not incapable of making personal exertions and was not altogether devoid of ambition is clear from the part he took in the origin and progress of the Mughal campaign against Kamrup, as well as in its sequel—the consolidation of Imperial authority there.

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Such a man was totally unfit to guide the destinies of the Koch state in the troublous times which overtook it when the mighty figure of Nara Narayan had passed away. Raghu Deb, who had refrained from proclaiming formal independence so long, now did so. He made friends with the Afghan chief, Isa Khan, and soon felt himself strong enough to symbolise the assumption of independent royal dignity by striking coins in his own name, after the traditional custom of the parent state.

Early relations with Raghu Deb.

This bold defiance of his authority was too much for Lakshmi Narayan to bear in silence. But as he dared not force Raghu Deb to submit, he had recourse to trickery. He fomented the naturally turbulent spirit of Raghu's son, Parikshit, and instigated him to rebel.* But the revolt was ruthlessly put down. To escape from his father's wrath, Parikshit left home and sought refuge with Lakshmi Narayan, who received him cordially.†

Their influence on Koch-Mughal history.

The strained relations between the Koch Bihar and Kamrup kings continued without abatement. The latter had, for a long time past, been anxious to gain possession of the fertile outlying tract of Bahirband. He had conquered it during the time of Nara Narayan, but had to restore his prize when the territorial compromise was made. He now resolved to recapture it from his weak cousin (Lakshmi Narayan). The latter felt that he had no chance of success in fighting Raghu Deb single-handed, and turned for help to the only possible quarter, the Mughal court, with which he could claim hereditary friendship. The disquieting news of the friendly alliance already concluded by his opponent with the powerful Afghan chief, Isa Khan, brought home to Lakshmi Narayan, all

* Gait's History of Assam, p. 63. The Koch chronicles and the *Buranjis*, as well as the Persian works, are silent on the point. Dr. Wade refers to Parikshit's revolt against his father, but does not suggest that it was instigated by Lakshmi Narayan.

† Gait's History of Assam, p. 64 : Dr. Wade's History of Assam.

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the more urgently, the necessity of strengthening the bond of union with the Mughals, even if it were at the cost of his own independent status. He decided to acknowledge the formal supremacy of the Emperor Akbar, in order to enlist his armed support against the formidable neo-Koch-Afghan* combination that confronted him.

Lakshmi Narayan's formal acknowledgment of of Mughal sovereignty (1596).

The Koch king approached the Bengal governor, Raja Man Singh, propitiated him with his sister and arranged for a personal interview with him, with a view to tendering formal submission to the Imperial authority. On the 22nd of December, 1596, Raja Man Singh met the Koch king at a place named Anandapur (probably a Koch frontier town in the vicinity of the Ghoraghat region).† What transpired at the interview is not quite clear.‡ It appears that Lakshmi Narayan offered formal submission to the Mughal

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* In order to avoid confusion and to distinguish between the alliances of the Koch Bihar and Kamrup state with the mutually hostile Muhammadan powers (the Mughals and the Afghans) in Bengal, I have designated the one as the Koch-Mughal and the other as the neo-Koch-Afghan alliance.

† *Akbarnamah*, Vol. III, p. 1067.

‡ The exact passage may be quoted :—"The *Patkunwar* raised the head of rebellion, and by the help of Isa had some success. At this time Lachmi Narayan petitioned His Majesty and through Raja Man Singh requested that he might be associated with eternal dominion. The Raja hastened from Salim Nagar to Anandapur (?). Lachmi Narain received him at a distance of 40 kos... . They met on horse back and there was a banquet of friendship. Afterwards the Raja went to his quarters, thinking that he would then treat the chief with honour. On the way he observed that the latter was distressed, and so he dismissed him with respect. After some time he (the chief) gave his sister to the Raja."

Abul Fazl's description of the interview, particularly the attitude of Lakshmi Narayan, is rather curious. After political submission had been rendered, the Koch king hesitated to return the formal call of the Mughal viceroy, and went only half way. He probably thought it derogatory to dance attendance at the place of the Bengal *subahdar*, the vicegerent of the Emperor. Out of respect for his feelings, Raja Man Singh did not insist upon the return visit of the Koch king and allowed him to go back to his place.

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sovereign, and this was accepted, on his behalf, by the Bengal viceroy with good grace.*

Ushered in the second stage of Mughal north-east frontier policy.

Though the event of 1596 does not seem to have yielded any great tangible result, it cannot be denied that it is a definite landmark in the history of Mughal north-east frontier policy. It signified the end of the first phase of policy and ushered in the second one, that of subordinate alliance with Koch Bihar, an ominous prelude to a policy of imperialism which was soon to follow. While the powerful and astute king Nara Narayan was careful to avoid personal contact with the Mughal Emperor, and sought to keep up friendly relations with him through envoys, his weak and short-sighted son, Lakshmi Narayan, was compelled by exigencies of circumstances to stoop so low as to solicit a personal interview with his viceroy, and, what was more

* There is some confusion with regard to the real nature of this event. Stewart (History of Bengal, p. 119) and Gait (History of Assam, p. 64) have observed, obviously on the authority of the *Akbarnamah*, that Lakshmi Narayan declared himself a vassal of the Mughal Emperor in 1596. There is nothing in Abul Fazl's work which would enable us to estimate the degree of subordination of the Koch king. The whole passage is beautifully vague, but it is clear that the Bengal viceroy was really anxious to soothe the susceptibilities of Lakshmi Narayan as far as practicable.

The inseparable attribute of vassalage being payment of tribute or personal service, or both, it is pertinent to enquire whether the Koch king was at this time burdened with any or all of them, or whether he was left alone with a formal acknowledgment of Imperial authority only. In the absence of any definite statement of Abul Fazl on this point, and in view of the very conciliatory and accommodating attitude of Raja Man Singh towards Lakshmi Narayan, as well as of the positive record of the *Baharistan* (p. 14a), that it was only in the year 1609 that the latter appeared before the then Bengal viceroy, Alau-d din Islam Khan, at Ghoraghat, with a suitable tribute, and agreed to render personal service in the Imperial cause, the event of the year 1596 does not appear to have resulted in anything more than a formal acceptance of Mughal suzerainty by the Koch king. It can hardly be called vassalage in the strict sense of the term, as the essential attributes appear to be wanting. The political condition of Bengal was as yet far from secure, and Akbar was probably satisfied only with a verbal submission on the part of the Koch king.

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humiliating, to acknowledge Imperial suzerainty of his own accord.

Raghu Deb's attack on Bahirband repulsed by a Koch-Mughal army (1597).

Hardly had the Koch-Mughal subordinate alliance been concluded, the Kamrup king launched upon his projected attack on Bahirband and captured it without difficulty.* Greatly elated by his triumph, he next attacked the Koch king himself and pressed him so hard as to compel him to seek shelter in a fort, and then laid siege to it. In his sad plight, Lakshmi Narayan appealed for help to Raja Man Singh. The latter must have looked upon the neo-Koch-Afghan alliance as a great political menace, and he took the earliest opportunity to nip it in the bud. He sent a chosen force under two Afghan officers, which met the Kamrup king in an open engagement. In the fierce struggle that ensued, the latter fought unaided and was defeated with great loss of men and materials (May, 1597).† Raghu was also compelled to vacate Bahirband.

The disastrous defeat sustained by Raghu Deb at the hands

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* The *Akbarnamah* does not name precisely the territory which was attacked by Raghu Deb, but tells us vaguely that "he collected an army, and took possession of some territory," Raghu Deb once attacked Bahirband during Nara Narayan's regime, and his son Parikshit repeated the experiment. As a fertile frontier region on the Brahmaputra, it was liable to frequen t attack, and it is only reasonable to assume that Raghu Deb captured it again.

† *Akbarnamah* Vol. III. pp. 1081-82. The Koch chronicles and the *Buranjis* are silent about this event. Stewart (History of Bengal p. 119) and Gait (History of Assam, p. 64) refer to it only in a scrappy and inaccurate way. The former finds the ostensible reason of the attack of "the neighbouring princes" on the Koch king in his acceptance of Mughal vassalage in 1596, while the latter tells us that Raja Man Singh "sent a detachment into Koch Bihar to protect him (Lakshmi Narayan), but the quarter from which an attack was threatened is not stated." Abul Fazl's clear and detailed account admits of no confusion, and it is certain that it was Raghu Deb who attacked Lakshmi Narayan. As to the reason of the attack, it is to be found not in the latter's acceptance of Mughal supremacy but in the hereditary enmity of the rival Koch dynasts as well as in the natural tendency of the stronger and the more enterprising of the two to prevail over the weaker.

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of the Koch-Mughal host served as an eye-opener to his Afghan ally, Isa Khan. Preoccupied with his own affairs, he had failed to offer assistance to Raghu Deb, whose discomfiture greatly redounded to the growth of Mughal prestige and power and disturbed the equilibrium in Koch politics, so vital to his own safety in Bengal. Isa now hastened to make amends for his folly and got ready an army with which he was to go to the succour of the Kamrup king.

But this plan was greatly alarming to Raja Man Singh, as it threatened to upset the favourable issue of the last triumph and jeopardise the position of his protege. Being anxious to frustrate it, he hit upon an ingenious device. This was to keep Isa Khan too busy near at home to turn his attention abroad. A combined assault by land and water on his stronghold of Katrabau was accordingly made. Lakshmi Narayan, it appears, was induced to co-operate with the Imperial forces. A stubborn naval encounter took place in the vicinity of Katrabau (September, 1597). Isa Khan, aided by Masum Kabuli, offered a herioc defence and ultimately scored a brilliant victory. The Imperial admiral Durjan Singh, a son of Raja Man Singh, was slain with a large following, while a good many soldiers, including Koch *paiks*, were taken prisoner.*

Mughal diversion in favour of Koch Bihar king by an attack on Isa Khan, the Afghan ally of Raghu Deb.

* *Akbarnamah*, Vol. III. pp. 1093-94. The Koch chronicles and the *Buranjis* are silent about the incident. The *Bansabali* (pp. 110-13) however, records the story of a joint expedition undertaken by Sila Rai, the brother-general of Nara Narayan, and Raja Man Singh, against the *Gaur Patsa*, who is not named. It resulted in the total defeat of the latter and in his flight to the country of the *Feringis*, after which the conquered tract was parcelled out amongst the victors. According to Gait (History of Assam, p.55) this story "appears to refer to the defeat of Daud by Khan Jahan in 1576." It is hardly probable. From the *Akbarnamah* it seems clear that Raja Man Singh assumed the viceroyalty of Bengal only in 1594, long after the demise of Daud Kararani as well as Nara Narayan and Sila Rai, and that the alliance which might possibly have induced the Koch king to join hands with the Mughals was concluded full two years after the final defeat of Daud.

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Its partial success.

Though the severe defeat sustained in the autumn of 1597 resulted in a great loss of Imperial prestige and power, and also adversely affected the fortunes of the Koch Bihar king, yet it was not an unmixed evil so far as the latter was concerned. Isa Khan's hands having been full nearer home, the much-dreaded combined onslaught on the Koch domain

Notwithstanding the fact that there are important points of difference between the account of the *Bansabali* and that of the *Akbarnamah*, regarding the Koch-Mughal campaign of 1597, I am inclined to think that both of them refer to the same event, and that, shorn of the flagrant inconsistencies, the former would exactly agree with the latter. The reasons for my suggestion are mainly circumstantial. Both the versions agree that a united attack was made by the Koch king and Raja Man Singh, the Imperial general, upon their common enemy, who was a Bengal chief. According to Abul Fazl, Man Singh's tenure of office in Bengal falls within the regnal years of Lakshmi Narayan and not within those of his father (Nara Narayan), so that if he were really a party to the joint expedition, his Koch colleague was no other than Lakshmi Narayan. If that be so, it is not difficult to suggest the name of the common enemy against whom the campaign was directed. Here again, Abul Fazl comes to our aid. He tells us it was Isa Khan, the Afghan chief of Bhati, who was the most stubborn enemy of Mughal Bengal during this age and was also inimically disposed towards the Koch Bihar state. He was undoubtedly the object of attack of the Koch-Mughal expeditionary force (for a detailed discussion on the point, see JASB, 1904, pp. 57-63). The testimony of the *Akbarnamah* receives some confirmation from the family history of Isa Khan's descendants at Jangalbari (extracts from which are quoted by Dr. Wise in JASB, 1874, pp. 213), which records the traditional version of the warfare waged by Man Singh against their ancestor, resulting in the complete triumph of the latter. Though Lakshmi Narayan has no place in the episode, there seems little doubt that it refers to the triangular combat of 1597, to which he was a party and in which the son of Man Singh, and not his son-in-law, was killed.

The crux of the whole question—identification of the common enemy having thus been tackled, it is comparatively easy to explain away the apparent incongruities which have crept into the *Bansabali* so as to make the campaign result in a brilliant victory for the Koch-Mughal army, followed by the partition of the territories of the vanquished and his flight to the *Feringi* country. In view of the many faults of omission and commission, which mark this early nineteenth century Koch chronicle, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the politic generosity shown by Isa Khan to the vanquished king, Lakshmi Narayan, has been magnified into an unalloyed triumph by the royal panegyrist.

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was averted, and the Kamrup king was consequently made to pocket in silence the infamy of his last defeat.

A party to the ignominy of the reverse as Lakshmi Narayan was, he appears to have escaped much more honourably than could be expected. Isa, who was far-sighted and prudent, took great pains to humour the Koch king and disarm his hostility by an act of generous clemency. He set free all the Koch prisoners unconditionally.*

Isa Khan died in the year 1599. His death came as a great relief to Lakshmi Narayan, for it removed the most powerful friend of his cousin, Raghu Deb, and thereby held out the welcome prospect of a respite from his unrelenting hostility. This was confirmed into a reality owing to another circumstance. This was the recrudescence of ill-feeling between Raghu Deb and the heir-apparent, Pariskhit Narayan, which reached such a height as to result in the latter's withdrawal from the kingdom,† giving rise to a new issue—disputes regarding succession.

Death of Isa Khan (1599 A.D.).

A lull in the Koch internecine feud followed the troublous years of 1596 and 1597, lasting till the death of the Kamrup king, and there arose no further occasion for Mughal intervention in north-eastern Indian politics. But the appetite had come with eating, and the policy of subordination already adopted towards Koch Bihar was not given up by the Mughals. On the other hand, it was carried to its logical conclusion as soon as a suitable opportunity presented itself.

Lull in Koch internecine feud.

Before I pass on to the story of the evolution of the new phase of policy, it is necessary to trace the history of Mughal policy towards Kamrup since its origin, in order to present

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* *Akbarnamah*, Vol. III. p. 1094.

† *Bansabali*, pp. 132-34. We are told that Parikshit's close association with a *Sannyasi* was greatly resented by Raghu Deb who admonished him. This led Parikshit to leave his father's place and move to the vicinity of the modern Gauhati. The disappearance of the heir-apparent naturally gave rise to troubles regarding succession.

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it side by side with that of Koch Bihar, the parent state, and this has been attempted in the next section.

Section III. Early Mughal Policy towards Kamrup (1588-1603).

Origin of Kamrup state under Raghu Deb.

As I have already remarked, the kingdom of Kamrup or "Koch Hajo"* (as it is sometimes styled in the Persian chronicles) originated from its parent state of Koch Bihar, in an act of rebellion, during the closing years of the reign of king Nara Narayan.† Its founder was his nephew Raghu Deb, and its capital was Barnagar.‡ Though already in the enjoyment of the most important requisites of a royal potentate—territory, and an absolute and unfettered authority over it, Raghu Deb appears

* Much vagueness and uncertainty exists with regard to the precise boundaries of the Kamrup state. In the light of the materials derived from the *Baharistan-i-Ghabi*, it is possible to give a fairly correct estimate of them. Roughly speaking, the kingdom covered the tract now included in the Goalpara and Kamrup Districts. It extended from above Hatsilah in the Kari Bary hills, on the left side of the Brahmaputra, along the bend of the river right up to Pandu, which was the south-eastern frontier town. Gauhati does not appear to have been included in Kamrup till a long time had passed after its conquest—in fact, not till after 1638, and Gait's contention (History of Assam, p. 64), based apparently on the *Bansabali*, that Parikshit removed his capital to Gauhati is not at all borne out by Mirza Nathan, according to whom Barnagar continued to be the royal seat, though Gilah was a favourite residence. On the right side of the Brahmaputra, Kamrup commenced north of the *parganah* of Bhitarband, and covering the region along the angle of the river, including Khonthaghat, stretched as far as the confluence with the Bar Nadi. Kohhata, which stood on that river, was the frontier town on the east.

It is necessary to note in this connection that Blochmann (JASB, 1872, p. 50) laboured under a great misconception in excluding the whole tract between the Manas and the Bar Nadi (*i.e.*, Kamrup proper) from the state of "Koch Hajo" and including the same in Assam. The *Baharistan*, the *Padishahnamah*, the Koch chronicles and the *Buranjis*, all include it in the Kamrup kingdom. In fact, it was its central region and the capital was located therein.

† For details, see section II, pp. 104–105.

‡ Identified by Gait (Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, p. 70) with "the place still known by that name, about 7 or 8 miles from Barpeta in the direction of Raha (Dt. Kamrup)."

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to have refrained from formally assuming independent rank during the life-time of Nara Narayan.*

Raghu declared independence (1588 A.D.).

It was one year after the death of his uncle (1588 A.D.) that Raghu Deb openly proclaimed his independent status † in Kamrup, and sealed it by the issue of a new coinage.‡

* The inscription of Raghu Deb, commemorative of the rebuilding of the temple of Hayagriva Madhaba at Hajo, dated 1505 *Saka* (1583 A. D.) is illuminating on the point. The "Lord of Kamarupa" (as Raghu dubs himself therein) did not as yet think himself strong enough to omit all references in that inscription to his powerful uncle, "the wise king Malla Deva". Had Raghu Deb asserted full-fledged independent sovereignty in the year 1583, the latter's name would not have found an honourable mention there. The only reasonable explanation of this unusual epigraphic record lies in the fact that the founder of the Kamrup state did not think it feasible to declare open independence at once, and wisely postponed it till the death of Nara Narayan, and this is confirmed by his coinage.

† It is curious to note the attitude of Abul Fazl towards the Kamrup kingdom and its founder (Raghu Deb). He vaguely refers to him as the *Patkunwar*, and informs us of "his rebellion" against Lakshmi Narayan, soon after the latter's accession to power (*Akbarnamah*, Vol. III. pp. 1067-68). He thus ignores the separate entity of the Kamrup state altogether. In the *Ain-i-Akbari* (p. 117), he goes a step further and includes Kamrup in the domain of the Koch Bihar king. It is difficult to believe that the learned compiler of the most exhaustive official history of Akbar's reign was really ignorant of the origin of Kamrup state, the more difficult, in view of the fact that he gives us details of the struggle of its founder (aided by Isa Khan) with Lakshmi Narayan and Man Singh. I am inclined to take this omission on the part of Abul Fazl as deliberate. It is really the resultant of the long-established friendly relation of Mughal Empire with Koch Bihar. The defensive alliance between Nara Narayan and Akbar, the master and patron of Abul Fazl, would probably explain why the disintegration of the Koch kingdom and its virtual break-up into two separate states, though an accomplished fact, should not find a place in the Mughal state chronicle. The mention of an event implying a loss of prestige and power of the ally of his hero, was obviously thought to be unwise and inexpedient. Further, steeped in official outlook as Abul Fazl was, he could not have possibly helped looking upon the secession of Raghu Deb as an act of successful revolt, subversive of legitimate authority, and unworthy to be countenanced in his work. Hence the condemnation of the assumption of independent status by Raghu as a *rebellion*.

‡ Three coins of Raghu Deb have so far been discovered (*vide* JASB,

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This was only the first and the least offensive act of Raghu Deb with regard to Lakshmi Narayan. He was a man of firm resolve, restless ambition and dogged tenacity. Like Babur he was a born leader of men, and like him he combined in himself boldness in design with promptitude in action, diplomatic skill with personal valour, and discretion with enthusiasm. He resolved to take full advantage of the weak regime of Lakshmi Narayan to strike a further blow at the territorial integrity of his domain. The policy of pin-pricks indulged in by the latter, irritated Raghu greatly and goaded him all the more to open enmity.

His growing enmity with Lakshmi Narayan.

In order to ensure success in the imminent conflict, it was incumbent on the Kamrup king to strengthen his position by a foreign alliance. Clever and clear-sighted as he was, it was not difficult for him to realise that the field had already been circumscribed and that he had practically no choice. The Koch-Mughal alliance of 1578 having long been an accomplished fact, it was but a foregone conclusion that Lakshmi Narayan would hold it fast and try to draw it all the more closer in his hour of need.

The only way to meet the situation and provide against the inevitable growth of the Koch-Mughal union was to throw in his lot with the Afghans. Raghu Deb accordingly resolved to steal a march on Lakshmi Narayan and safeguard his own position by an alliance with Isa Khan, "the zamindar of Bhati," and the sleepless enemy of the Mughal peace in Bengal. Isa was in a position to help Raghu with men and money as well as to make an effective diversion in his favour, if necessary, by attacking the Imperial

Led him to ally himself with Isa Khan, the Afghan chief of Bhati.

1895, pp. 238—241, Supplement to the Catalogue of the Provincial Coin Cabinet, Shillong, pp. 210-211) and all of them are dated 1510 *Saka* (1588 A.D.). This date coming closely to that on all the known coins of Lakshmi Narayan (1509 *Saka*) clearly indicates the time of the declaration of independence by Raghu.

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territories in south-eastern Bengal. Further, he was already prejudiced against the Koch state, owing to its long-standing friendship with the Mughal Empire.

Raghu Deb accordingly proposed a friendly alliance with Isa Khan. Interest and ambition alike led Isa to agree. It was a simple maxim of statecraft which he followed in establishing friendship with the foe of the protege of the Mughals, his bitter enemy. Isa could not afford to see Raghu crushed by the united Koch-Mughal army, for, it might strengthen the cause of the Mughals in Bengal, to the detriment of his own safety. Though primarily a weapon of defence, the new alliance might also be used as an instrument of offence and Isa might gratify his thirst for territorial expansion at the cost of the Koch Bihar state. So the neo-Koch-Afghan alliance was soon an accomplished fact.*

Nature of the alliance.

Strengthened by the new alliance, Raghu Deb took the offensive and led a vigorous assault on Bahirband, which he recaptured without great difficulty. He followed it up by an attack on Lakshmi Narayan himself, who was soon driven to seek shelter in a fortress.

Raghu's attack upon Lakshmi Narayan.

In his dire distress, the Koch king solicited the armed help of the Bengal viceroy, Man Singh, through whom he had acknowledged the formal supremacy of the Mughal Emperor in the year 1596. It was sent without delay. Raghu Deb, unaided by Isa Khan, at first fought bravely but was severely defeated at the end. This disquieting news put the Afghan chief on his mettle. He gathered his army hastily and moved to the help of Raghu, but could not proceed far. Raja Man Singh, who was determined to prevent a junction of the two forces, now made a great diversion in favour of Lakshmi Narayan

Its futility.

* *Akbarnamah*, Vol. III. p. 1067. Unfortunately we do not know the terms, but it appears that the new alliance was purely defensive in character.

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by a well-planned combined attack on Isa's main stronghold. Isa fought hard and drove back the enemy with great loss.

The splendid success achieved by Isa did not by one iota improve the position and prospects of Raghu Deb, but, on the other hand, affected them adversely. For, in spite of the reverse suffered, the politic aim of the Bengal viceroy was however amply realised. Fully engaged in defending his hearth and home against the Koch-Mughal onslaught, Isa Khan could not proceed to the help of Raghu. The latter's cherished desire to wipe out the stain of the last defeat was totally blasted, and, as ill luck would have it, remained unrealised till his death.

Effect of Man Singh's diversion in favour of Lakshmi Narayan upon Raghu Deb.

There appears to have been no further conflict between the kings of Koch Bihar and Kamrup till the demise of the latter. Meanwhile Isa Khan died. The nightmare to the Imperial officers of Bengal now disappeared, and the political situation was considerably eased. To the nascent state of Kamrup, the demise of Isa Khan, the uncrowned king of south-eastern Bengal, was a calamitous affair and boded ill for its future. The only possible ally who could effectively checkmate the powerful Koch-Mughal alliance formed against Kamrup, was now gone, and its political security and solidarity were greatly endangered.

Isa's death and its effect on Raghu Deb's position and prospects.

For a moment the Kamrup king stood isolated and friendless. His political position was extremely gloomy. A renewed Koch-Mughal attack was hanging over his head like the sword of Damocles, and an additional danger now lurked from behind. It was the prospect of a Koch-Ahom Alliance. With Nara Narayan's death, the era of enmity with the Ahom state, in Koch history, had ended, and the idea of a diplomatic marriage with the Ahom ruler was looming large before his successor, Lakshmi Narayan.

His political isolation.

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The problem of the hour was, on the one hand, to find out a good substitute for Isa Khan in order to provide against an attempt upon Kamrup from the west, and, on the other hand, to prevent the establishment of the Koch-Ahom friendship which might jeopardise its security from the east. In order to solve it, Raghu Deb decided to court the friendship of the Ahom king Sukhampha, before Lakshmi Narayan would have any chance to try it himself. He sent an envoy to Sukhampha, offering his daughter. The offer was accepted, and Princess Mangaldai was given in marriage to the Ahom king with a suitable dowry.*

Marriage alliance with the Ahom king.

The marriage alliance† with the Assam sovereign was a triumph of Raghu Deb's skilful diplomacy and wise statecraft. He now arranged to kill two birds with one stone. The bug-bear of an attack on Kamrup from the east as well as from the west disappeared at once, and Raghu's political position was greatly strengthened. The new alliance was based on a community of interests, and this boded well for its permanence and stability. The growing intervention of the Mughals in Koch politics was looked upon with suspicion and alarm by the Ahom king as well, and the necessity for strengthening Kamrup, as a sort of buffer state, had already been brought home to him.

Its importance.

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* *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 71, 72. Gait (History of Assam, p. 103) tells us, apparently on the basis of the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*, that "in 1585, the Koch king Raghu Deb gave his daughter Sankala in marriage to Sukhampha... ." This appears to be doubtful. The *Akbarnamah* clearly mentions Isa Khan as the friend and ally of Raghu early in his career, and does not refer to the latter's alliance with the Ahom king, the necessity for which seems to have arisen only after the death of the former (1599 A. D.). So the evidence of the *Purani Asama Buranji* seems to be more in accordance with the probability of the case. Though the event is not dated, it is certain that it occurred only after the accession of Lakshmi Narayan (1587 A.D.), and not in 1585 A. D., as Gait would have us believe.

† For the sake of brevity, I have referred to the alliance of Kamrup with the Ahom state as the neo-Koch-Ahom alliance, where necessary.

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Raghu Deb did not long survive the neo-Koch-Ahom alliance. He died in 1603 A.D.,* after a reign of fifteen years. He was undoubtedly a great king, who, by his dogged tenacity and skilful enterprise, founded an independent state, maintained its integrity against enormous odds, and, by his tact and diplomacy, left it strong and secure.

Death of Raghu Deb (1603 A.D.).

Raghu's reign is an important landmark in the history of Kamrup, particularly in relation to the Mughals. It saw the first phase of Mughal policy, characterised by a state of indirect hostility towards Kamrup. The Mughals did not, as yet, fight directly against the Kamrup king, but only indirectly, in support of their protege, Lakshmi Narayan. In their ready intervention in north-eastern Indian politics of this period, the Mughals were actuated primarily by a motive of enlightened self-interest. They could not afford to see their stubborn enemy, the Afghans, gain the upperhand in Koch region, for, it might strengthen their cause in Bengal. The two parties really fought their own issues in foreign soil, under the thin veneer of auxiliaries. No idea of imperial aggression was, as yet, in the air.

A resume of his relation with the Mughals.

The Kamrup king, on his part, was fully conscious of the strength and resources of the Mughals, and dared not give them any direct cause for offence. He was, on the other hand, handicapped by the fact that they had already cast in their lot with the parent state, so as to preclude the possibility of any friendship towards its rebellious offshoot. Hence an alliance with Isa Khan, the great adversary of the Mughals in Bengal, was the only alternative.

It must not, however, be forgotten that it was in Raghu Deb's reign that the seed of future troubles was sown, and that

* Gait (History of Assam, p. 64 and footnote) discusses the date of Raghu's death and fixes up 1603 A. D., rather tentatively, on the basis of Parikshit Narayan's only coin extant. In view of the peculiar custom of Koch coinage already mentioned, there need not be any doubt about it.

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his overweening ambition and aggressive acts were really the dominant factors which occasioned Mughal intervention in the Koch politics. Though an open and undisguised warfare between Kamrup and Mughal India did not yet break out, their relations were strained almost to the breaking point, for which Raghu had primarily to thank himself. He thus may well be said to have sowed the wind, while his unfortunate son and heir, Parikshit Narayan, reaped the whirlwind.

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CHAPTER IV.

SECOND PHASE OF MUGHAL NORTH-EAST FRONTIER POLICY—POLICY OF AGGRESSIVE IMPERIALISM.*

Section I. New Mughal Policy towards Koch Bihar (1608-17).

The closing years of the first decade of the seventeenth century witnessed a momentous change in the north-eastern frontier policy of Mughal India. Originally a defensive weapon, it had already shown signs of conversion into an instrument of political aggression, and, during the early years of Emperor Jahangir's reign, the process was completed.

Policy of aggressive imperialism evolved.

The assumption of viceregal power in Bengal at this time by an energetic, ambitious and resolute officer, named Alau-d din Islam Khan, facilitated the transformation of the Mughal foreign policy. Firm in the enjoyment of Imperial favour, the powerful and despotic governor at first put down the dying embers of internal strife, and then set himself vigorously to extend the territorial limits of the Mughal Empire, at the expense of the several Mongoloid principalities in north-eastern India.

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* Materials for a history of the second phase of Mughal policy greatly vary in quantity as well as in quality. The native chronicles—Koch, Ahom and Assamese, offer only occasional help, but the Persian works, particularly that of Mirza Nathan, make a more exhaustive and systematic treatment. Further, the former are not really contemporary accounts so far as this topic is concerned, and this detracts much from their historical value, while the latter, being mostly so, are more authentic.

A difference in the amount of material in case of the different frontier kingdoms may also be noted. Our sources for Mughal relation with Koch Bihar of this epoch are rather meagre. The *Darrang Raj Bansabali* has a few notices of the reigning Koch king, Lakshmi Narayan, and stops abruptly with the conquest of Kamrup (1612-13), while the *Rajopakhyan* glosses over his discomfiture at the Imperial court. The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Purani Asama Buranji* make only casual reference to Koch

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Koch Bihar, the weakest as well as the nearest of them, was naturally the first victim of the new policy of armed imperialism which was now evolved. It had already acknowledged the formal sovereignty of the Mughal Emperor. But this was not deemed enough. It was soon reduced to tributary vassalage and was rendered politically innocuous. The climax was reached when its king (Lakshmi Narayan) was deprived of personal freedom, and confined first at the capital of Bengal and afterwards at the Royal Court.

Its effect on Koch Bihar.

In order to realise fully the operation of the new Mughal policy in Koch Bihar, it is necessary to review the political position there, particularly in relation to Kamrup. Lakshmi Narayan was still holding sway when Raghu Deb was succeeded by Parikshit Narayan. The demise of Raghu Deb did not improve the relation of the rival Koch dynasts, but, on the other hand, worsened it. Parikshit revived his father's hostile policy towards Lakshmi Narayan, and led a pillaging expedition against Bahirband. The latter demanded redress for this aggressive action, but failing to obtain it, launched into war. An obstinate struggle took place, which ended in his defeat and narrow escape, with great loss of men.

Lakshmi Narayan *vs.* Parikshit Narayan.

Bihar affairs ; so does the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*. It is only from the *Baharistan* of Mirza Nathan that we can gather some useful data, which, added to those derived from the *Buranjis* and a contemporary Jesuit letter (see Introduction, p. 10), enable us to reconstruct the history of the times.

As regards Kamrup, we are on better grounds. The *Bansabali* gives details of its conquest by the Mughals, while the *Buranjis* too speak more often of Kamrup king Parikshit's relations with the Imperial power. But by far the most exhaustive and authoritative account of Mughal aggressions against Kamrup is furnished by Mirza Nathan, and it is corroborated, in outline, by Abdul Hamid Lahori, the author of the *Padishahnamah*.

In the case of Assam as well, the Persian writers deserve more prominent mention than the native *Buranjists*. The most important historian of the first Mughal invasion of Assam is Mirza Nathan, and he is followed by Abdul Hamid Lahori. Amongst the *Buranjis*, the *Purani Asama Buranji* needs special mention, not only as a supplement to the Persian chronicles but also for its corroborative value.

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Greatly humiliated by the reverse, Lakshmi Narayan resolved to avenge it as soon as possible. He sought the friendship of the Ahom king, but could not get it, and next turned to his own suzerain, the Mughals. In June, 1609, the new Bengal viceroy, Alau-d din Islam Khan, reached Ghoraghat from Rajmahal, and thence sent an envoy to Lakshmi Narayan, asking him to accept Imperial vassalage. The latter was placed between two fires—the persistent hostility of his turbulent nephew nearer home, and the bug-bear of an invasion from outside in case of refusal of the demand for political submission. As the Koch king was burning with a desire for revenge, he readily responded, and in the company of Raja Raghunath of Shushang who had already tendered submission, presented himself before the viceroy, and sealed the acknowledgment of vassalage with the payment of an annual tribute.*

Lakshmi Narayan accepts Mughal vassalage (1609).

Though to a superficial observer this incident might appear to have affected the history of Koch Bihar only, it was really of great significance in the annals of Mughal north-east frontier policy as a whole. For, it symbolised the completion of the process which had begun with the political subjection of Koch Bihar in the winter of 1596, and, which was soon to affect the states of Kamrup and Assam as well. A new vista of aggressive imperialism, formerly undreamt of, now opened, and a systematic and persistent attempt at territorial expansion began.

Significance of the event in the history of Mughal north-east frontier policy.

In the case of Koch Bihar, the event of 1609 sounded the death-knell of its independence. It was indeed a black day in the history of that state when it was compelled by the exigency of circumstances to sink to the position of abject vassalage, never to regain its former status (the two brief interludes between the years 1658 and 1665 being excepted).

And in that of Koch Bihar.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 14b.

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Lakshmi Narayan incites the Mughals to conquer Kamrup.

Sure of Mughal help, though dearly bought, Lakshmi Narayan resolved to feed fat his grudge against his turbulent nephew, Parikshit, and induced the Bengal viceroy to attack his realm.* The prospect of ruling over the united realms of Koch Bihar and Kamrup, on the fall of Parikshit, appears to have loomed large before his mind,† and he gladly offered to render personal service in an attack on the latter state. The imperialistic viceroy, who had once been thwarted in his attempt to subjugate Kamrup,‡ lost no time in responding to the sinister suggestion of the Koch king, and sent a large army against Parikshit, in the winter of 1612. The Mughal campaign lasted for about nine months (*c.* November, 1612 to July, 1613), and ended in the conquest of Parikshit's kingdom.

Lakshmi Narayan's part in the Kamrup campaign (1612-13.)

In fulfilment of his promise, Lakshmi Narayan rendered good service to the Mughals. Soon after the capture of Parikshit's great stronghold of Dhubri (*c.* April, 1613), he crossed the river Sankosh, and invaded Khonthaghat (the western frontier of the Kamrup state), which abutted on his own kingdom. Parikshit soon found himself in an alarming situation. He had to face the attack of the Mughals from the front, while his rear was threatened by the Koch king. To save himself from this desperate position, Parikshit fought his uncle so hard as to compel him to remain on his saddle for a week. In great distress, Lakshmi Narayan appealed for help to the Mughals, and Raja Satrajit, with 200 war-boats and a contingent of Afghan cavalry, arrived. Unable to cope with the reinforced enemy, Parikshit gave up his contest with Lakshmi Narayan and fell back on Gilah. Thence he launched a vigorous night-attack on Dhubri fort as well as on the Mughal fleet stationed in the Gadadhar river ; but this proved futile, and he hastily

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 14b : *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 64.

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 152b.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 14b.

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withdrew, once again, to Gilah. Lakshmi Narayan now made another attempt to take him by the rear ;* thereupon, the Kamrup king, despondent and panic-stricken, evacuated Gilah, crossed the river Manas with his family and belongings, and reached his capital Barnagar.

The Imperialists occupied Gilah. Anxious to secure the person of the fugitive Raja, they gave him a hard chase and reached the bank of the Manas, accompanied by Lakshmi Narayan and his contingent.† The Kamrup king, eager to save his own life, at last surrendered himself to the Mughal commanders, and hostilities between the two parties then ended.

By the beginning of August, 1613, the conquest of Kamrup was completed. The prominent part which Lakshmi Narayan played therein, entitled him to a fair share in the profits of victory. In fact, his invasion of the Khonthaghat region marked the turning point in the whole campaign. Thenceforward, the fear of an attack on his rear was everpresent in the mind of Parikshit and caused him great anxiety and trouble. Later on, Lakshmi Narayan's attempt upon Gilah so alarmed him that he hastily evacuated it and finally turned his back upon the struggle.

Lakshmi Narayan temporarily put in charge of the eastern part of Kamrup.

In the tentative arrangement which was made for the government of the conquered realm, Lakshmi Narayan was entrusted with the administration of the territories, east of the river Manas, by Mukarram Khan, the Mughal commander.‡ He naturally expected that he would be confirmed in his office. In fact, it was settled that as soon as practicable, Lakshmi Narayan would pay his respects to the viceroy at Jahangirnagar, and would there be formally invested with his charge.¶

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* *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II, p. 67.

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 118a.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 152a.

¶ *Ibid*.

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But he was doomed to bitter disappointment. A change in the Bengal viceroyalty at this time spoilt his chance for ever. On the 11th of August, 1613, Alau-d din Islam Khan suddenly died in Bhowal. He was succeeded in office by his brother, Shaik Qasim, titled Muhtashim Khan. The latter was a queer sort of man—cruel, capricious and tyrannical. He recognised at first the legitimate claims of Lakshmi Narayan and promised to meet them in accordance with the policy of his predecessor; but these were afterwards totally ignored.

Change in Bengal government affects his fortune.

What was worse still, is the harsh and crooked treatment he meted out to the Koch king. Soon after his arrival at Jahangirnagar, the capital (May, 1614), the new *subahdar* openly avowed his desire to fulfil his promise, and sent Raja Raghunath, a friend of Lakshmi Narayan, to escort him to his place. The innocent and unsuspecting Koch king hastened thither, placing Kamrup in charge of his own officers. The day he was first presented to the viceregal Court, he was treated with the utmost courtesy. But, on the second day, contrary to all the canons of diplomacy and morality, he was put under confinement, and placed under the surveillance of one of the officers, named Abdur Rahaman Patni (August, 1614).* Lakshmi Narayan thus paid the price of his foolish act of courting foreign help and expiated for his impotent territorial greed by the loss of personal freedom and by exile from his kingdom.

Lakshmi Narayan confined at Jahangirnagar by Qasim Khan.

This incident, small in itself, gave rise to a new phase in Koch-Mughal relations, which were strained almost to the breaking point. The Koch vassal was dragged down to the level of an ordinary political offender and deprived of his personal liberty and his domain, just at the moment when he expected rewards for his loyalty and

Significance of this event and its consequences.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 153a-b.

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devotion to the Imperial cause. True, Qasim Khan could claim precedents set up by the late viceroy. But these were applicable only in the case of dangerous political out-laws, such as, Musa Khan, the son of Isa Khan, and his turbulent followers,* and were totally out of place with regard to a loyal vassal like Lakshmi Narayan, ruling an extensive domain commanding the most vulnerable frontier of Bengal, whom the exigencies of dynastic hostility had brought within the pale of Mughal sovereignty. Political wisdom ought to have dictated to the Bengal viceroy the necessity for according a differential treatment to him, so as to ensure his support in consolidating Imperial authority in Kamrup. In short, Qasim Khan was guilty of an act of great duplicity and glaring faithlessness, politically inexpedient and morally indefensible. No wonder, it gave rise to serious complications, and shook Mughal authority in the north-east frontier region to its very foundation.

Rebellion in Koch Bihar.

A formidable insurrection broke out in Kock Bihar when the news of the confinement of its king reached there. A simultaneous rising in Khonthaghat, owing to a similar treatment accorded to Parikshit, brought matters to a crisis. An Imperialist detachment was sent from the new head-quarters at Jahangirabad to put down the trouble. A fortified post was established at Dalgaon, whence the army moved to Guma Duar (occupying the western part of Parikshit's realm). It then crossed the river Sankosh and entered Koch Bihar territory. The fort of Jaipur (situated amidst the hilly and jungly regions to the north-east of the Koch capital) was the stronghold of the rebels, and, as such, the target of the Imperialist attack. It was stormed, and a series of plundering excursions by the cavalry in the surrounding regions weeded out the rebellious elements altogether (October, 1614).†

After the revolt had subsided, the young son of Lakshmi

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 153a-b.

† *Ibid*, pp. 154a, 164b, 165a.

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Narayan was installed as the ruler of Koch Bihar. Maidan,* an uncle of the latter, looked after the state affairs in the interest of the boy-king. Early in his regime, he was faced with a troublesome situation. In the summer of 1615, a Koch rebel of Khonthaghat, Raja Nobar by name, having been worsted in a series of engagements, took shelter in the domain of Koch Bihar. A Mughal detachment under Mirza Saleh marched thither, and demanded the surrender of the fugitive from the Regent, under pain of war. An envoy conveyed the news to the young ruler, who got panic-stricken and ordered the immediate capture and delivery of the rebel to the Mughals. This was done, and the danger of an invasion of his realm avoided.†

Administrative arrangement in Koch Bihar during Lakshmi Narayan's absence.

A great deal of obscurity prevails over the life of Lakshmi Narayan in exile. While the native Koch chronicles vaguely refer to it as an enforced stay in the Mughal capital, some of the *Buranjis* definitely mention the loss of his regal status. The *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, on their part, do not give us direct information on the point. ‡ It appears that the Koch king was detained at Jahangirnagar for about a year, and then sent to the Royal Court, to be

Life of Lakshmi Narayan in exile.

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* The *Bansabali*, p. 47, mentions "Maidan" as a son of Biswa Singh. This makes him an uncle of Lakshmi Narayan, and he is referred to by Mirza Nathan as "Manik Deo".

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 175a.

‡ The *Darrang Raj Bansabali* (pp. 140, 41) tells us that Lakshmi Narayan went to Delhi to secure the help of the Emperor against Parikshit. In response to his appeal, the Mughals attacked Kamrup. But Lakshmi Narayan continued to stay in Delhi for the entertainment of the *Patsha*. Meantime Parikshit was captured and sent there. A compromise between the two was arranged by the *Patsha*, and they were then sent back to their respective domains. The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and an old Assamese *Buranji* by the late Jajnaram Deodhai Barua refer to the loss of Lakshmi Narayan's regal status, while the *Rajopakhyan* mentions his enforced visit to Delhi and the subsequent return therefrom.

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included amongst the many vassals who had to dance attendance upon the Emperor Jahangir. For about two years and a half more, he lived in exile ; at last a revision in Mughal policy was made with the advent of a new governor in Bengal (1617), and he was reinstated to power.

Thus for about a decade a persistently aggressive policy was followed by the Mughals towards the state of Koch Bihar. But the time for crying halt to this policy had already arrived. It had received a serious set-back in Assam, and an inevitable reaction soon came on, which made it defensive and constructive. Before I pass on to the history of the new phase of policy, it is necessary, for the sake of the unity of the narrative, to trace the working of the old one with regard to Kamrup and Assam, and this has been attempted in the next two sections.

Section II. Mughal Aggressive Policy towards Kamrup (1603-12).

Parikshit Narayan's reign ushers in the second phase of Mughal policy towards Kamrup.

After the death of Raghu Deb, his eldest son, Parikshit Narayan, succeeded to the throne. His reign witnessed the second phase of Mughal policy towards Kamrup—that of deliberate aggression, pursued ruthlessly to its logical conclusion, though under the plausible garb of intervention on behalf of a protege. After a brief spell of independence, the Kamrup state disappeared for ever and was merged in the Mughal Empire.

Character of the new king.

The new king was utterly unfit to guide the ship of state through the stormy waters ahead. Restless ambition and haughtiness of temper were the most prominent traits of his character. Personal valour and ability he possessed, but these were marred by his volatile and fickle nature and by his addiction to wine. He seemed to have been at peace with no body.*

* According to the *Bansabali* (pp. 132-34), Parikshit rebelled twice against his father, and, by his close association with a wicked *sannyasi*, was instrumental in bringing about his death. Further, we are told that one of his earliest acts

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Parikshit inherited, to a certain extent, the spirit of daring enterprise of his father, but he lacked his prudence and tact, his firm resolve and sustained energy. Like king Perseus of Macedon and like Canocher in *The Fair Maid of Perth*, his energy evaporated when the right moment for action arrived or at the first set-back. His life and reign were short and these ended in a grim tragedy.

Parikshit inherited from his father an enmity with Lakshmi Narayan. He strengthened his fortifications, greatly augmented his military resources, and, taking advantage of a heavy flood, repeated Raghu's venture upon Bahirband, conquering it anew in spite of the opposition offered by Lakshmi Narayan. The latter, in his distress, acknowledged Imperial vassalage.

His early relations with Koch Bihar.

Threatened with the imminent danger of a united Koch-Mughal attack, Parikshit became anxious to improve his own precarious position. The old ally, Isa Khan, was long dead, and new allies were hard to find out. He hastened to renew the neo-Koch-Ahom alliance established by his father. Susengpha *alias* Pratap Singh, a son of Sukhampha, was the reigning Ahom king. To him Parikshit gave a daughter in marriage.* But this did not really improve his position. His tactless and arrogant demeanour had already prompted pin-pricks and petty quarrels with the Ahom king, which were hardly composed by the intimate family-tie now established†

And marriage alliance with the Ahom king.

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as a king, was an unprovoked attack on Lakshmi Narayan. The *Purani Asama Buranji* (p.72) tells us that in the beginning of his reign, Parikshit murdered a younger brother (Indra Narayan) and forced another (Man Singh) to seek refuge with the Ahom king, with whom also his relations soon became strained.

* The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* dates the event in 1608 A. D. The *Purani Asama Buranji* (p. 79) refers in general terms to the conclusion of an alliance with the Ahom king by Parikshit.

† The *Purani Asama Buranji* (pp. 72, 79) tells us that the Ahom king having refused to hand over the political refugee, Man Singh, to the Kamrup monarch, the latter retaliated, as early as he could, by harbouring two political offenders (Akhe and Kekera) who had escaped from the Ahom state.

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The result was that though a semblance of friendship and goodwill lingered on, there was really no fellow-feeling and union of hearts between the two kings, which might ensure mutual help and co-operation.

His relation with the Mughals.

Meantime Parikshit's relation with the Mughals gradually became hostile. The reason is not far to seek. He was the successor of Raghu Deb, and, as such, was the heir to the hatred and ill-will of the Mughals. This had steadily been on the increase, in exact proportion to the growing dependence of Lakshmi Narayan on Mughal support. Apart from this, there was another more direct and urgent circumstance which embittered Mughal attitude towards Kamrup and ultimately paved the way for open enmity with it. This was a strong desire for political aggression, personified in the Bengal viceroy, Alau-d din Islam Khan.

Events of 1609.

From the frontier *sarkar* of Ghoraghat, Islam Khan, in 1609 A. D., demanded through an envoy the submission of Parikshit to the Mughal Emperor. Parikshit prided himself on his own independence, and was manly enough to send a stern refusal. Thereupon, an Imperialist officer, Abdul Wahed by name, was sent at the head of an army to Kamrup. After a short encounter, Parikshit was defeated. In the vain hope of securing redress for the unwarranted attack on his realm, he proceeded to Fatehpur* (*en route* to the Mughal capital). But no useful purpose appears to have been served by the journey.

Parikshit's attempt to secure Ahom help.

After the first wave of imperialism had rolled back, Parikshit made a frantic attempt to strengthen himself for the inevitable deluge which was soon to follow. He sent a messenger to his Ahom son-in-law soliciting monetary help, to which the latter gave an evasive reply. He however kept up a friendly show by proposing the establishment of trade and commercial intercourse with Kamrup.†

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 14b. † *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 79.

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The vague response of the Ahom king was tantamount to a refusal. To add insult to injury, he next sought to impress upon Parikshit the advisability of vacating Kamrup without a struggle and of joining him in a united attack upon the Mughals. The short-sighted and selfish casuistry of the Ahom king was too palpable to deceive Parikshit. Almost for the first time in his life, he voiced wisdom and foresight when he hinted at the far-reaching consequences of the issues involved, and pointed out that the Mughal occupation of Kamrup, involving as it did the removal of a buffer state, would inevitably react on the political security of the Ahom kingdom.* But king Pratap Singh failed to take the hint and persisted in his impolitic attitude. He refrained from giving any help to Parikshit and left him to his fate. Parikshit was now to reap the fruit of his policy of plunder and blunder. He had provoked his uncle but had not succeeded in crushing him altogether. What was worse still, is the fact that he had offered the Mughals a splendid opportunity for interfering once again in Koch affairs, of which they did not fail to take advantage.

And its futility.

A great deal of diversity of views exists with regard to the precise circumstances which brought about a recurrence of hostilities between Parikshit and the Mughals in the winter of 1612. The native chronicles are almost unanimous in referring to the Kamrup king's relentless aggressions against Lakshmi Narayan as the prime factor in the origin of the war. The latter is invariably portrayed as an innocent and inoffensive man, seeking legitimate redress for his grievances with the help of his suzerain—the Mughals, who appear in the Koch political arena in a purely noble role, as the vindicator of the rights of the weak and the oppressed against the aggressive and dogged hostilities of the strong.†

Outbreak of war between Parikshit and the Mughals (*c.* beginning of November, 1612).

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 79-80.

† *Darrang Raj Bansabali*, pp. 138-41 : *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 79.

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The original authorities in Persian, on the other hand, do not even mention explicitly the quarrel between the two kings as a contributory element in the contest, though they appear to have been not altogether ignorant of its existence. They however strike up a new note with regard to the attitude of Lakshmi Narayan and the Mughals towards Parikshit. The former does not at all figure in the harmless defensive role assigned to him by the native historians, but comes out really as a sinister plotter, who was goaded on by his thirst for territorial gain to induce the Mughal viceroy to fall upon the domain of the latter. And his was the Roman hand behind the aggressive enterprise of Alau-d din Islam Khan.*

Its real origin.

Thus the real origin of the conflict seems to lie in a threefold combination of causes, operating in varying proportions. Dynastic jealousy and enmity had certainly its influence, but it was intensified by the secret and selfish machinations of Lakshmi Narayan against the territorial integrity of Parikshit's domain, which, in their turn, served but to fan into flame the aggressive imperialistic tendency, innate in the contemporary Bengal viceroy. The last one was undoubtedly the most decisive factor in the whole issue. The event of 1609 had already shown which way the wind was blowing, and Parikshit's fate was sealed. No direct offence of any kind, except possibly his proud independence, was laid at his door. Yet he was bluntly asked to surrender his freedom, and on his refusal, armed pressure was

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The native annalists reveal at best the half-truth in emphasising the quarrel between the rival dynasts as a factor in the conflict.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 152b : *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II, p. 64. The former work (p. 14b) tells us that Lakshmi Narayan pointed out to Islam Khan that the invasion of Kamrup would enable him to justify (literally, "serve as a *dastawej* for") his own subjection, and he expressed his readiness to help the latter on that occasion. It further says (p. 152b) that Islam Khan had promised to Lakshmi Narayan to put him in charge of Kamrup after its conquest (thereby fulfilling his cherished desire). The latter work however (Vol. II, p. 64) clearly suggests that Lakshmi Narayan threw before the Bengal viceroy the tempting bait of the conquest of "Koch Hajo" (Kamrup), and this was at once swallowed.

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brought to bear upon him. The short punitive campaign which followed, yielded no tangible result. But the resolute governor only bided his time. The submission of the sons of Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore, followed by the defeat and death of Osman Afghan, in the spring of 1612, made him quite free to give a finishing touch to his work.

Its character.

It is thus quite clear that the Kamrup campaign was, in its essence, a premeditated enterprise, being the inevitable outcome of the new Mughal aggressive policy which had already caught Koch Bihar in its meshes, and was afterwards to overtake Assam as well. A keen desire for imperial expansion was in the air. The rich and flourishing kingdom of Kamrup, occupying the lower Brahmaputra valley and teeming with elephants and aromatic plants, must be wiped off and made a part and parcel of the Empire. This was the real aim of the Mughals.*

And its occasion.

It is curious to note that the immediate circumstance which precipitated the war served to hide its real character and gave it a plausible colour. This was the cruel treatment, accorded by Parikshit, to a vassal zamindar, Raghunath of Shushang. His whole family was imprisoned and he failed to get it back. He then appealed to the Bengal viceroy. The latter made enquiries, found the complaint to be genuine, and decided to punish the miscreant by an attack on his kingdom.†

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* The *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 114a-115a : *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 65 : *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 199. All the authorities agree with regard to the uncompromising attitude adopted by the Bengal viceroy towards Parikshit. After the fall of Dhubri, the latter offered to pay tribute and acknowledge Imperial vassalage and begged to be left alone in his domain, but the viceroy was inexorable. He urged on his officers to capture Parikshit and effect a thorough conquest of his realm, which was subsequently done.

† *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 64. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* does not mention the incident, but portrays Raghunath as having led the vanguard of the Mughal expeditionary army, obviously thirsting for revenge for the wrongs committed by the Kamrup king.

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Great preparations were made for the impending compaign, and when the rains were over (*c.* beginning of November, 1612)* the Mughal army started from Jahangirnagar under the joint command of Mukarram Khan and Shaikh Kamal, with Raja Raghunath of Shushang at the van. It was well equipped with war-boats (the only sure vehicles of communication in the Brahmaputra valley) and cannon and elephants. † A large number of *amirs* and vassal zamindars of Bengal *subah*, including Raja Satrajit of Bhusnah, Bahadur Ghazi, Shona Ghazi, and Majlis Bayazid joined the Imperial ranks. Mirza Nathan, the author of the *Baharistan*, followed suit. Though the Bengal viceroy did not find it expedient to lead the army in person, he issued elaborate instructions for its guidance and directed the operation at every stage. He was, in fact, the soul of the campaign and supplied also its brain-power.

Leading incidents.

From Toke,‡ the land force moved along the bank of the Brahmaputra, closely keeping touch with the Imperial fleet in the river. The army halted for the first time at a distance of 200 *kos* from Toke at Bazrapur (or Peearpur ?). ¶ The next stoppage was at Patladah, about 130 *kos* to the north-west of Jahangirnagar. The first encounter took place at Salkonah,§ on the south-western border of Kamrup, where a fleet of 300

Naval encounter at Salkonah.

* The *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* does not give definite time, but internal evidence suggests that the army started early in November, 1612. The *Padishanamah*, the Koch chronicles and the *Buranjis* are silent regarding the time-element.

† According to the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* (p. 106b), the expeditionary force included 5000 matchlock men and 300 state elephants, and was accompanied by 500 war-boats. The estimate of the *Padishahnamah* (Vol. II. p. 65) is 6000 horse, 10000 to 12000 foot and 500 ships.

‡ About 22 miles north of "Bowal," which is about 16 miles north-east of Dacca (*vide* Rennell's Map).

¶ The MS. is indistinct and the real place meant is not clear. Rennell's Map No. 6 shows Bazrapoor, on the right bank of the Brahmaputra, about 6 miles north of Sheerpoor. About 8 miles down the river, on the same bank stands Peearpoor.

§ Talconow, on the left bank of the Brahmaputra, between Patladah and Kari Bary (*vide* Rennell's Map, No. 5) is obviously meant.

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war-boats sent by Raja Parikshit met the Mughal navy. After a short skirmish, the Kamrup navy was defeated, and a great number of the boats fell into the hands of the victors.* The frontier region having been successfully traversed, the Mughals resumed their march very cautiously along the jungly and hilly banks of the Brahmaputra into the heart of the enemy country (whose geography was unknown), in close co-operation with the fleet.

Mughal attack on Dhubri fort.

The skirts of the fort of Dhubri, "the foremost of all the forts in Koch realm", which was garrisoned by 500 horse and 10000 infantry, were soon reached. Before attacking this stronghold of Parikshit, the Mughals decided to secure their line of communication with the base, by reducing to submission the zamindars of the Bhitarband and Bahirband regions who owed allegiance to the Koch Bihar king. This was done by Mirza Nathan, who led a number of pillaging expeditions against them. A small contingent was stationed there to put down any future trouble.†

Siege of Dhubri (January to middle of March, 1613).

Proceeding further, the Mughals encamped at a place two *kos* distant from Dhubri, which was situated on the right bank of the Brahmaputra. Skirmishes with the Kamrup forces now began. Two attempts to capture the fort of Dhubri by assault having failed,‡ the Imperialists decided to lay siege to it and busied themselves in clearing away the jungles around. Next, they raised a fortress in front of that of the enemy and made it as high as the latter. From this base, they gradually advanced under cover of a series of earthen mounds (*khakrij*). This trick was for a time successful. The seventh earthen

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 109. The *Padishahnamah* does not mention this naval conflict. From Dr. Wade's book we learn that Mukarram Khan's earliest act was to take "Silkoonari and Hathisoner"—apparently variant forms of Salkonah and Hatsilah, the two border places in Parikshit's realm.

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 111a.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 112a.

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barrier reached near the outer wall of the Dhubri fort, and the Mughals, under its shelter, opened fire upon the men and animals within. But still the garrison showed no signs of wavering. At that time one of the Mughal gunners played the traitor and was instrumental in destroying a large number of his comrades. This was a great set-back to the besiegers, and their task turned out to be a protracted one.*

Under orders of Islam Khan, a change was now made in the plan of operations. In addition to the main fort, three small stockades, the first two at a distance of two arrows, and, the third at half the distance of an arrow from the enemy stronghold, were now made. One morning, the Mughal artillery commenced heavy fire upon Dhubri fort simultaneously from their four bases, while the *Beldars* (corresponding to the Sappers and Miners of the present-day Indian Army) took advantage of the preoccupations of the enemy to proceed, under shelter of the nearest earthen mound, to the fort-wall unopposed and make an opening there wide enough for an elephant to pass through. By noon it was completed, and through it, the Mughal infantry poured into the fort, with the elephants in front (*c.* middle of March, 1613).†

Thus the fort of Dhubri was captured after a prolonged siege of three months and a half.‡ It was an event of signal importance in the whole campaign. The most impregnable stronghold of Parikshit, girt by the Brahmaputra on three sides, was now gone, involving a great loss of his prestige. Further, a large number of his men fell in fighting, and Fatha Khan Salka, the commandant of the fort, out of affection for his

Capture of Dhubri—its importance.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 113a.

† *Ibid*, p. 113b.

‡ The *Padishahnamah* (Vol. II. p. 65) says that the siege lasted only for a month. Mirza Nathan's version is certainly more accurate, as he himself took part in it and gives a far more detailed account of the affair. The Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis* as well as the *Bansabali* are however silent with regard to the conquest of Dhubri fort.

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son who was taken captive, voluntarily surrendered to the Mughals.*

After the conquest of Dhubri, the Imperialists resolved to follow up their success by attacking Gilah,† the seat of Parikshit's residence, where he had retreated. But, owing to Shaikh Kamal's intervention, further advance was postponed.

Premature negotiations for peace carried on by Shaikh Kamal.

The latter, on his own initiative, asked Parikshit to tender submission, on pain of the loss of his personal freedom and of his kingdom. The Kamrup king readily fell in with the advice, accepted Imperial vassalage, and sent through his *wakil*, Ramdas, one *lakh* of rupees, 100 *tangan* horses and 100 elephants for the Bengal *subahdar*, and three *lakhs* of rupees, 300 elephants and 300 *tangan* ponies for the Emperor, besides his two sisters, one for each of them. He gave suitable presents to Mukarram Khan and Shaikh Kamal as well and prayed in return that his kingdom might be spared‡ and he himself exempted from personal service.¶

Thereupon, Shaikh Kamal induced Mukarram Khan to write to the Kamrup king in encouraging terms. The Shaikh himself next started for Jahangirnagar in company of Ramdas and Raja Raghunath, to intercede with the *subahdar* on behalf of Parikshit, but received a stern rebuff from him. He was admonished for his self-complacency, and was ordered to continue hostilities till Parikshit was captured and his

Their failure.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 114a. The *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 119, names the commandant correctly, but does not give details of his career.

† This is undoubtedly the same place as Gilajhar, situated on the west side of the Gadadhar river, about 10 miles from its confluence with the Brahmaputra (in the modern Goalpara District); Martin (Eastern India, Vol. III. p. 472) and Gunabhiram Barua (Assam *Buranji*, p. 64) identify the place correctly.

‡ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 114a-115a.

¶ The *Padishahnamah* (Vol. II. p. 66) does not give details of this peace-move but mentions it generally, and adds that Parikshit promised to release Raghunath's family as well. The *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 499, also refers to the peace-overtures and their subsequent failure.

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kingdom thoroughly subjugated. * The peace-move having been rejected, Shaikh Kamal rejoined the army, which halted at Dhubri during the month of *Ramzan*.

After the spring rains had been over, warfare was resumed. Lakshmi Narayan now attacked the Khonthaghat region. Parikshit came out from Gilah and offered Lakshmi Narayan a stubborn resistance, compelling him to seek reinforcement. Harassed by the depredations of the reinforcing Afghan cavalry, Parikshit withdrew to Gilah. An attempt was then made to starve him to submission. The Bengal zamindars with their own fleet came down to the mouth of the Gadadhar river, and raised a fortified post there, blocking the path of provision-supply to Gilah.

Resumption of hostilities.

Threatened with dire distress, Parikshit planned an elaborate night-attack, by land and water, upon the Imperialists. He sent his entire navy (700 strong) with 50 elephants, under the command of his son-in law, Dimarua Raja, to capture the post at the mouth of the Gadadhar river, while he himself, with his whole land army, composed of 156000 *kandi* archers, 5000 cavalry, 5000 musketeers, and with 300 elephants† started (from Gilah) to make a simultaneous attack on the garrison in Dhubri fort.

Combined attack (by land and water) on Dhubri made by Parikshit and Dimarua Raja.

But as ill-luck would have it, the combined assault was only partially successful. The Kamrup navy thoroughly overpowered the advance-guard of 50 war-boats, during the last watches of the night, and next captured the Imperialist watch-post on the Gadadhar river with little opposition. 400 muskteers were imprisoned, and 250 war-boats of the zamindars secured, and only 43 of the latter could escape.‡

Its partial success.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 115a.

† *Ibid*, p. 115b : The *Padishahnamah* (Vol. II. p. 66) gives a much lower figure, *e.g.*, 20 elephants, 400 cavalry and 10000 *paiks*.

‡ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 115b.

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While the naval attack was thus crowned with complete success, the *coup de main* on Dhubri fort miscarried, owing to two untoward occurrences. First, the bridge which was made across the river Brahmaputra suddenly broke down; secondly, when very near the destination, one of Parikshit's elephants turned mad and created confusion in his ranks. A great delay was caused and consequently the whole scheme was spoilt. Parikshit reached Dhubri when the night had already expired and the day far advanced, only to find that the garrison in the fort was fully prepared to meet him.*

But real failure.

Determined to make the most of a bad situation, Parikshit, with his able lieutenant Nitai Chhar Nazir, charged the Imperialists in co-operation with his navy. For a moment he was successful. A small detachment was thoroughly defeated, and the fall of the second stockade (adjoining the main stronghold) seemed imminent. † At this juncture, the elephant of Nitai Chhar Nazir, overpowered by the storm of enemy arrows, ran away from the battlefield, accidentally dropping him down, and he was at once captured.‡ Though it was a great setback to Parikshit, he did not lose heart and made three sallies at the Dhubri fort, but to no purpose. Fighting by land however went on indecisively all day long. ¶

Meantime the admiral of Parikshit gained more solid results, compelling the Mughal navy to beat a hasty retreat. But just as the sun was setting, a cannon-ball wounded him, while another struck fatally his chief officer (*mir bahar*). This sudden mishap turned the tide of the struggle. The navy was severely disorganised; it soon gave up fighting and

Unexpected Mughal triumph.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 116a.

† *Ibid*, p. 116b: The *Padishahnamah* (Vol. II. p. 67) also tells us rather vaguely that the victory of the *Kaffirs* appeared to be certain.

‡ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 116b.

¶ *Ibid*, p. 117a.

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hastily retreated, and the Mughals gained an unexpected triumph.*

Totally unnerved by this reversal of fortune, Parikshit Narayan gave up fighting altogether, and beat a hasty retreat at night to Gilah, leaving behind all his war-equipments, and also the army which soon followed suit.† Thereupon, the Imperialists marched towards Gilah. On the way, tidings regarding its evacuation by Parikshit reached them. The news of the advance of Lakshmi Narayan to attack Parikshit by the rear, had so much alarmed the latter that he voluntarily gave up Gilah and got across the Manas river to Barnagar.‡ Gilah was thus entered unopposed and a great booty secured.

Parikshit's hasty flight to Gilah and thence to Barnagar.

Anxious to capture the royal fugitive, the Mughals then advanced towards Kamrup proper, while the fleet was sent to intercept Parikshit's passage of the Manas. On the bank of the river Sankosh, Lakshmi Narayan joined the Imperialists. When the Manas was at last reached, after six day's strenuous march, it transpired that Parikshit had crossed it already and entered Kamrup before the Mughal navy could reach there, and the latter had then moved to Pandu still pursuing him. The army next busied itself in crossing the river to keep touch with the fleet.¶

Pursued by the Mughals.

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* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 117a.

† *Ibid*, p. 118a. *The Padishahnamah* does not mention the sudden turn of fortune, but it refers (Vol. II. p. 66) generally to the combined land and naval attack by night on the Dhubri fort, which resulted in a failure. The *Bansabali* (p. 142) seems to allude vaguely to this night-attack which is mentioned by Dr. Wade also. He points out that its failure was due to the death of Parikshit's admiral "Purandar", who may possibly be identified with "Dimarua Raja" of Mirza Nathan. The *Purani Asama Buranji* (p. 199) also refers to this naval encounter of "Purandar", but in a confused manner.

‡ *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 67.

¶ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 118b.

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Meanwhile the news of the arrival of the Imperial fleet at Pandu and the land army on the bank of the Manas, reached Parikshit. Finding it impossible to escape from the dogged pursuit of the enemy, and anxious for the safety of his own life, Parikshit at last voluntarily tendered submission and surrendered his kingdom and all his elephants to the Mughals. (*c.* end of July, 1613).* Kamrup now lost its meteoric independence of about a quarter of a century and was merged in Mughal India.

Voluntary surrender of his person as well as of his kingdom. (*c.* end of July, 1613).

A chequered and tragic career was in store for the Kamrup king.† In exchange for the solemn guarantee of the joint leaders of the Imperial army, regarding his personal independence, Parikshit agreed to go in person to the place of

Parikshit removed to Jahangirnagar.

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* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 119a. I may note in passing that the *Bansabali* (pp. 141-45) gives an interesting account of Parikshit's struggle against the Mughals, which, shorn of its faults of omission and commission, seems to agree in substance with the Persian chronicles.

† A great deal of confusion and obscurity prevail with regard to the end of Parikshit's career. Acoording to the *Bansabali* (pp. 144-46), Parikshit was sent to the Royal Court after his surrender. An attempt for a compromise between him and Lakshmi Narayan was then made by the Mughal Emperor, but without success. Parikshit was subsequently allowed to return, and he reached the place of the Bengal viceroy, *en route* to his kingdom. The latter having refused to reinstate him to royal dignity, in spite of the formal permission of the Emperor, Parikshit wended his way back to the Mughal Court, but died on the way at Prayag (Allahabad). The *Purani Asama Buranji* (pp. 73, 80, 200) tells us that after his capture by Mukarram Khan, Parikshit was sent to Delhi, where he was kept in confinement. Later on, he was permitted to return, keeping his son as a hostage at the Royal Court. But the Bengal viceroy refused to give his domain back to him, and Parikshit attempted to seek redress from the Emperor, but died on the way. Dr. Wade goes into greater details with regard to Parikshit's later career, and, curiously enough, comes very near the account of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* He refers to the confinement of the Kamrup king at the Royal Court and his subsequent release therefrom, on condition of the payment of seven *lakhs* of rupees and the retention of his four sons as hostages. He adds that on account of the stern attitude

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the Bengal viceroy.* Accompanied by Mirza Hasan, the *bakshi* of the troops, and Raja Raghunath, Parikshit started for Jahangirnagar by boat. Meantime Islam Khan, in his eagerness to meet the defeated Raja, moved to Bhowal and ordered the party to join him there. But he was suddenly taken ill and died just before its arrival.† "As the Kamrup king boasted of royal dignity 800 years old, Islam Khan had resolved to send him to tender submission to the Mughal Emperor, in person."‡ But his demise left this desire unfulfilled. The death news was for a time kept secret, and Parikshit was made to pay his respects to the deceased *subahdar*. The officers then decided to put Parikshit in confinement "after the manner of Islam Khan." But owing to Mukarram Khan's intervention, this was not done.¶

When Qasim Khan (the successor of Islam Khan) reached Jahangirnagar (9th May, 1614), Parikshit, with his sons, was presented to him. The viceroy directed Mukarram Khan to hand over Parikshit to one of his own trusty officers, so that he might be kept under surveillance, but the latter refused compliance on the ground of breach of solemn pledge. This enraged Qasim Khan, who had recourse to a strategem to gain his sinister end. One day, as the viceregal Court broke up, one of the officers, previously tutored, laid hands on Parikshit from behind so as to detach him from Mukarram Khan's company. The unfortunate king was soon handed over to Abdul Nabi for safe custody, in a similar manner as Lakshmi Narayan had been entrusted to Abdur Rahaman Patni. He was trained in the rules of

And there put in confinement by the *subahdar* Qasim Khan (*c.* May, 1614).

His sojourn at the Royal Court.

of the Bengal viceroy, Parikshit was not allowed to take possession of his domain, and ultimately died of a broken heart, at Allahabad.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 119a.

† *Ibid*, p. 141b.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 141a.

¶ *Ibid*, p. 141b.

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court etiquette and was made to dance attendance at Jahangirnagar.* Later on, he appears to have been sent, along with Lakshmi Narayan, to the Royal Court.

In the early part of his regime, Ibrahim Khan Fathjang, the successor of Qasim Khan, interceded with the Mughal Emperor for the release of Parikshit, on the ground of his faithful and loyal conduct and of the comparative easiness of the political situation in Kamrup. He further suggested that the Kamrup king might be reinstated to power, after he had paid the promised sum of seven *lakhs* of rupees (probably as war-indemnity). The Emperor consented, and sent Parikshit back with Mir Qiyam Imadu-d daulah to the place of Ibrahim Khan, with instructions to see to the fulfilment of the conditions (*c.* end of 1617).†

His release therefrom (*c.* end of 1617).

A mystery hangs round the life of the Kamrup king, subsequent to his release from the Mughal Court.‡ He appears to have failed to pay the stipulated amount to the Bengal *subhadar*, and consequently was not reinstalled to power. He died broken-hearted, in infamy and obscurity, sometime after the spring of 1618 A. D., after a stormy rule of about a decade and a half.

His subsequent career and death.

The disappearance of the Kamrup monarchy and its absorption in the Mughal Empire brought the Ahom state within the pale of Mughal foreign policy, which now attained

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* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 153a-b.

† *Ibid*, p. 235a.

‡ The *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* which is the only contemporary authority is silent here. Though it gives us details of Lakshmi Narayan's career up till 1624, it is mysteriously silent about Parikshit's life-story after his release from the Royal Court. As I have already shown, the *Bansabali*, the *Purani Asama Buranji*, and Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam, all agree generally that Parikshit was not allowed to take possession of his kingdom, owing to the opposition of the then Bengal viceroy, who is erroneously named as "Islam Khan," and, that he started back for the Mughal Court to secure redress, but died on the way at Allahabad. It seems probable that the failure of Parikshit Narayan to pay the promised sum led Ibrahim Khan to refuse his reinstatement to power.

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full scope in the north-eastern frontier. The history of the Imperial policy with regard to the Ahoms is a long-drawn one, full of dramatic incidents and startling changes, fit to be the theme of several chapters. Its origin and early phases have been treated in the next section.

Section II. Origin and growth of Mughal contact with Assam* up to 1616 A.D.

The history of Mughal relation with Assam is, in one sense, peculiar. Though the Ahoms were the last of the Mongoloid powers to come within the pale of the foreign policy of the Mughals, so that direct and close contact with them did not begin till after the conquest of Kamrup, it would be wrong to suppose that the two parties were absolute strangers when they first met.

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* A short note with regard to the territorial extent of the Ahom state at the time of its contact with Mughal India may prove useful at this stage. While the Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis* are generally silent, the Persian chronicles give us definite information on the point. Shihabu-d din Talish, the historian of Mir Jumla's Assam campaign, supplies a clear account of the boundaries of Assam of his time, which appear to hold good with regard to the whole period under review. We are told that "the length of Assam from west to east, from Gauhati to Sadiya, is about 200 *kos*; its breadth north to south, from the hills of the Miris, Mishmis, Daflas and Landahs (rather Ankas) to those of the Naga tribe is seven or eight days' journey at a guess. Its southern mountains touch lengthwise the hilly region of Khasia, Kachhar and Gonasher (southern part of the Garo hills) and breadthwise the hills inhabited by the Naga tribe. .....The land on the north bank of the Brahmaputra is called *Uttarkol* and on the southern bank *Dakhinkol*. *Uttarkol* stretches from Gauhati to the home of the Miri and Mishmi tribes, and *Dakhinkol* from the kingdom of Nak-kati Rani (rather Desh Rani) to the village of Sadiya."

With regard to the precise point at which the Ahom state touched Mughal Kamrup i.e., the west, Shihabu-d din's narrative may well be supplemented by that of Mirza Nathan and Abdul Hamid Lahori. Gauhati, which then stood on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, opposite to Pandu, appears to have been an important Ahom town on the west, and later on became the seat of a viceroy, styled the Bar Phukan. Sangari was the western frontier town in *Uttarkol*, while Kajali, which stood at the confluence of the Kalang river with the Brahmaputra, was the frontier post in *Dakhinkol*.

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Ever since the advent of the Mughals in the arena of north-eastern Indian politics, some sort of indirect relation might be traced between them and the Ahoms. It is curious to note that it tended towards hostility from the very beginning. A combination of two factors occasioned this peculiar phenomenon. First comes the traditional jealousy and enmity of the Ahom state with its western neighbour, Koch Bihar, and, the second was the early establishment of a friendly alliance between the Koch power and the Mughals in Bengal. The second came as a corollary to the first, but it really determined the nature of the Ahom-Mughal contact from its origin. The intimate relation formed with their political rival could not but prejudice the growth of amicable feeling of the Ahoms towards the Mughals, whose subsequent career only served to widen the gulf between the two sides, and ultimately paved the way for their positive enmity.

Beginnings of Mughal contact with Assam.

But there arose no occasion, as yet, for a direct clash of arms. The two powers contented themselves for some time with darting invisible shafts against each other, under the thin veneer of auxiliaries to the rival dynasts of Koch Bihar and Kamrup and of arbiters in their quarrels. On the plausible ground of intervention on behalf of their respective proteges, they really fought for the establishment of their own predominance in the north-eastern frontier of India. Thus was ushered in the first phase of the Ahom-Mughal history. While the Mughals befriended their protege Lakshmi Narayan, the Ahom king, Sukhampha, entered into a marriage alliance with the latter's opponent, Raghu Deb, and this was renewed afterwards by the next monarch, Susengpha (Pratap Singh), who received a daughter of Parikshit in his harem.

Marked by indirect hostility.

This state of indirect rivalry and hostility, which may well be compared to the weary fencing of two great boxers before their closing in for the final bout, did not however last long. It soon gave way to direct and undisguised enmity, which was

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the key-note of the second phase of the Ahom-Mughal politics. Two factors operated herein as well. The one was the practical annulment of the neo-Koch-Ahom alliance, while the other was the evolution of the policy of armed imperialism in the north-eastern frontier of Mughal India, during the early years of Jahangir's reign.

Opening of direct enmity with Assam.

I have already shown how Parikshit's turbulent and tactless demeanour led to the bungling of his affairs, and cut at the root of his alliance with the Ahom king. The Mughals took advantage of this situation to attack him and conquer his kingdom, thereby removing the wall of separation which had so long existed between them and the Ahom state, and paving the ground for direct and open encounter with it.

Its reasons.

It would probably be not wrong to suggest that even if the neo-Koch-Ahom alliance had remained intact, the conquest of Kamrup would not have been long delayed, and, the resultant—beginning of open conflict with the Ahoms, not long averted. For, the mighty wave of imperialistic aggression which had already swept over Koch Bihar, was sure to deluge Kamrup next, and would then inevitably have flooded its immediate neighbour, Assam. This is clearly brought home to us from the history of the times. So it seems reasonable to hold that the innate aggressiveness of the then Mughal India, more than any other thing, led to the first passage of arms with the farthest and the most powerful of the Mongoloid states on the north-eastern frontier i.e., Assam. It was indeed an irony of fate that the prophetic warning of Parikshit suggesting that the conquest of his territory was only the ominous prelude to a deadly attack on Assam, came to be too true so soon after it was sounded. For, in less than three year's time, the first gigantic Mughal attempt at a conquest of Assam was made.

From what I have already remarked, it would be clear that the Assam campaign of 1615 was, in its essence, a deliberate act

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Origins of the Ahom-Mughal warfare (1615).

of political aggression on the part of the Mughals, and, was in fact, the outcome of the same imperialistic policy which had lately been enunciated and acted upon, in regard to Koch Bihar as well as Kamrup with such signal success.* Notwithstanding this fact, other factors also played their part in giving rise to the struggle. Boundary disputes and trade jealousies appear to have complicated matters and joined with the political issue in precipitating the conflict.

Though the Persian chroniclers leave no room for doubt that the kingdom of Kamrup did not extend beyond the river Bar Nadi on the east, † the Mughals, as the legatee to Parikshit Narayan's sovereignty, seem to have regarded the territories east of that river up to Singri and even as far as the mouth of the Bharali river (to the north-east of Tezpur), as part of the conquered tract, and asserted their authority over it in spite of the strong remonstrances of the Ahom king.‡ Over and above the boundary quarrels, trade affairs supplied another cause of trouble between Mughal Kamrup and Assam. The rich natural resources of the latter—its elephants, *agar* wood, pepper, *bapta* cloth, tobacco. cereals, *etc.*, excited the cupidity of the Mughals, and they were anxious to overcome the innate aversion of the Assamese for trade intercourse with them. But very little success attended their efforts, and, as a consequence, a good deal of unauthorised and illegal trade

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* The truth of our contention is evident from the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, the *Padishahnamah*, as well as from the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*. No ostensible ground for the Assam expedition is given, and an unholy desire for political supremacy and territorial expansion appears to have been the guiding motive of the Mughals.

† Mirza Nathan (*Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 175b) and Abdul Hamid Lahori (*Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 89) definitely tell us that Kohhata, in *Uttarkol*, between Srighat and Kajali, was the boundary between Kamrup and Assam, while the latter locates Singri as "a place in Assam, situated between the hills and the Brahmaputra".

‡ *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 82.

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was carried on by them in the Ahom state, which was greatly resented by its king.

The *casus belli* of the first open encounter is to be found in the well deserved punishment meted out by the Ahom King to such an unauthorised tradesman named Ratan Shah who had trespassed far into Assam up to Singri and had procured *agar* wood there. His illegal act was detected, his goods confiscated, and he was turned out of the country.* Two merchant-vessels, laden with cereals and tobacco, were similarly laid hold of, north of Kajali, and two of their occupants killed, by an Ahom officer.†

The occasion.

Though really guilty of violation of boundary limits, as well as of an illegal trade intercourse, the Mughals were greatly enraged at the sharp and stern action taken by the Ahom king, and, assuming an air of injured innocence, made vast preparations for a bold retribution by an attack upon Assam. Sayyid Abu Bakr, the most trusty officer of the then Bengal viceroy, Qasim Khan, was placed in charge of a large army which included 1500 *mansabdars*, 2000 musketeers, more than 10000 cavalry and numerous infantry.‡ 300 war-boats, fully equipped, (400 according to the *Padishahnamah*) accompanied the expeditionary force. Of the more prominent Imperial officers, Raja Jagdeo, grandson of Raja Todar Mal, Raja Satrajit of Bhusna, and Jamal Khan Mankali joined the party.

Mughal expedition starts for Assam.

On the eve of the rains (1615), the expedition started from Bazrapur, proceeded up the Brahmaputra, and crossing the river Manas reached Barnagar. Thence it moved to Hajo and halted there for the rains. Imperial outposts were set up in

Reaches Hajo and halts there for the rains.

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, p 81.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 164a : the *Padishahnamah* is somewhat vague with regard to the personnel of the expedition, while the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, being a contemporary work, is naturally more precise and I have followed it.

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the surrounding region and the line of communication was secured.*

Meantime hard pressure was put upon the Mughal commander to continue his march even during the rains. Most unwillingly, the latter left Hajo for Kohhata, the frontier town on the Bar Nadi, and stopped there pending the arrival of reinforcements from Bengal. But they did not arrive, and Abu Bakr waited in vain till the end of the rains. As ill-luck would have it, the climate of Kohhata being very unhealthy, a good many men died of disease during the long stay there.†

With his ranks greatly depleted, the Mughal commander, early in November, 1615, began the struggle by a sudden attack upon Kajali, the Ahom frontier post on the south-west, which occupied a strategic position at the confluence of the Kalang river with the Brahmaputra and was garrisoned by a strong army, with 3000 war-boats. After a short skirmish, the Ahoms were defeated and put to flight. They left a great number of their ships behind, and their fort fell into the hands of the Mughals.‡

Mughal capture of Kajali fort (November, 1615).

Flushed with easy success at the first encounter, the Mughals indulged in a series of aggressive and retaliatory measures against the Ahom king. Raja Satrajit, with 60 war-boats, advanced for a plundering excursion along the Kalang river to Kaliabar, and thence moving further, seized the fort of Sala and appropriated the royal treasures there. After three days' halt, he crossed the Brahmaputra to its right bank, moved westward, entered Bishnath, the seat of a sacred temple, and captured three votaresses there, and then triumphantly returned down the river.¶

Followed by plundering raids into the heart of Assam.

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* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 171a-b.

† *Ibid*, pp. 175b, 179b.

‡ *Ibid*, pp. 189b-190a.

¶ *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 82 : Dr. Wade's History of Assam. The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* does not give details, but refers generally to Raja Satrajit's capture of Sala.

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These offensive actions were too much for the Ahom king to bear in patience, and he now girded up his loins for a decisive engagement with the impudent foreigners. A fort was made at the junction of the Dikrai and the Brahmaputra. The Ahom officers were next instructed to strengthen the fortifications of Samdhara (which stood near the confluence of the Bharali with the Brahmaputra), so that a bold stand might be made there and further advance of the invaders checked. This was acted upon, and a number of stockades were also set up round the main stronghold (at Samdhara).*

Ahom preparations at Samdhara to check Mughal aggressions.

Meanwhile the Mughals had not been idle. They had advanced with little opposition up the Brahmaputra to its confluence with the Bharali, opposite to the fort of Samdhara. Attempts were then made to cross the Bharali by a bridge, but these proved futile owing to the rapid currents in the river. Unable to move further, the Mughals encamped on the right bank of the Bharali, and made fortifications there.

Mughal defensive measures opposite to Samdhara.

After a month's inaction, light skirmishes began. In one of them, the Mughals scored a great triumph. In a few boats they transported their horses across the Bharali and led a vigorous assault upon the Ahom stockade on the left bank, which was soon captured. Most of the garrison were put to the sword, while the remnants fell back upon the main fort.†

Ahom stockade on the Bharali river captured.

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* *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 83.

† *Ibid*, pp. 83-84 : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam. Notwithstanding the silence of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* on this point, the unanimous testimony of the Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis* leaves no doubt with regard to the authenticity of this second phase of the struggle, which ended in Mughal success. Mirza Nathan apparently did not take part in it and was then at Hajo, and naturally his account is not so vivid.

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This fresh discomfiture excited the wrath of the Ahom king and goaded him on to more serious exertions in stemming the tide of Mughal success. The officers responsible for the loss of the stockade were sternly punished, and a strong reinforcement of 14000 men sent to the Burha Gohain, the Bar Gohain and the Bar Patra Gohain, the chief Ahom commanders at Samdhara. They were exhorted to attack the enemy at an opportune moment and fight to a finish.*

Ahom army reinforced.

The fortune of war now turned in favour of the Ahoms. The first fruit of the renewed effort was the recapture of the stockade at the mouth of the Bharali.† Next, an elaborate night-attack on the Mughal fort opposite, was planned. The report of the spies was very encouraging. The fortress was on a sandy place, not adequately protected, and the jungles around were not cleared. Moreover, the haughty and self-sufficient Mughal commander was idling away his time and was totally unprepared for an emergency.‡

And their stockade regained.

At the dead of a wintry night (1615), three bridges were set up on the river Bharali, along which the Ahoms, 30000 strong, with 700 elephants, crossed over to the vicinity of the Mughal camp and led a daring charge upon it. The enemy was taken totally unawares, and the result was a foregone conclusion. There was hardly any contest, it was a mere rout. The Imperialist artillery and the elephants were the first to be secured by the Ahoms, who then succeeded in effecting a number of breaches in the fort-wall, and dashed within, with their own elephants in front. In the mêlée that ensued within the fort, Sayyid Abu Bakr was

Mughal fort opposite to Samdhara captured and the commander slain.

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 84 : Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

† *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 85.

‡ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 190a.

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killed unrecognised and he thus expiated for his negligence and folly with his own life.*

Defeat of the Mughal navy.

The fall of the commander and the capture of the fort sealed the fate of the Mughals. Their fleet, which had at first got the better of the Ahom navy, got panic-stricken and disheartened as soon as the unwelcome news reached it, and was soon overpowered by the jubilant Ahoms. A great number of war-boats with their occupants were captured.†

When all appeared to be lost, the shattered remnants of the Imperial army, headed by Sayyid Hakim and Sayyid Kasu who had arrived to reinforce Sayyid Abu Bakr but had so long kept aloof from the warfare, having been disgusted at his haughty and conceited demeanour, offered stubborn fighting. After a heroic struggle, the Sayyid brothers fell fighting. Raja Satrajit fled to Hajo in a boat, with three wounds. The rest thought discretion to be the better part of valour and surrendered to the Ahoms on condition that their lives would be spared.‡

Effect of the reverse on the Mughals.

In spite of the initial success, the maiden attempt of Mughal India upon Assam ended at last in ignominy and disaster.¶ Not to speak of the incalculable injury to their military prestige and political authority, the Mughals suffered a colossal loss in men and materials. 7000 persons, including a good many zamindars, were imprisoned, while about 5100 were either killed or fatally wounded, and about 3000 sought safety in the jungles around and were given up for dead.§

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* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 190a : *Purani Asama Buranji* pp. 85, 87 : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam.

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* p. 190b.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 191a : *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 86-87.

¶ Mirza Nathan attributes Mughal defeat to the military incompetence and defects in personal character of the Imperial commander, Sayyid Abu Bakr. His arrogance, want of tact and self-conceit disgusted his subordinates, and they did not co-operate with him whole-heartedly against the Ahoms.

§ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 191a. The *Purani Asama Buranji* shows remarkable agreement with the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* with regard to the names of the

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What was lost to the Mughals was gained by the Ahom king. In spite of his short-sighted and selfish policy of keeping aloof from the warfare between Parikshit and the Mughals, he at last succeeded in stemming the tide of Mughal victory when it was almost at its height. His self-confidence was enhanced, and his political position strengthened, while his military resources were augmented by the rich booty secured in elephants, horses, war-boats, guns, swords and munition.*

Ahom gains.

The Assam war was a great object-lesson to the Mughals. In the first flush of their imperialistic ardour they made an indiscreet attack upon the strongest Mongoloid state, without securing a firm foothold on their base (Kamrup). They wanted to expand before they had consolidated, and thus ignored the simple maxim of wise statecraft. The result was an unmitigated disaster, and it led to a reshuffling of their policy not only with regard to Assam but also regarding the other north-east frontier states, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Changes in Mughal policy foreshadowed.

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more prominent Imperialists, killed or captured. Sayyid Abu Bakr, Allahadad Khan Dakhni, Jamal Khan, Nara Singh Rai and Raja Rai are names common in both the works.

* For details, see *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 88.

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CHAPTER V.

DEFENSIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE MUGHAL POLICY IN THE NORTH-EAST FRONTIER.

Section I. Mughal Policy towards Koch Bihar (1617-1627).*

Change in Mughal policy towards Koch Bihar.

As I have already remarked, the disastrous Assam campaign of 1615 marks the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Mughal north-east frontier policy. Trained in the school of adversity, the Mughals gave up their aggressive attitude and soberly settled down to a policy of peace, conciliation and consolidation in their new sphere of activity. Nowhere is the changed policy more manifest than in regard to the Koch Bihar state, during the last decade of Jahangir's reign. The supersession of the existing governor of Bengal by a new one heralded the advent of the changed state of affairs.

Early in April, 1617, Qasim Khan was removed from office, and Ibrahim Khan Fathjang, governor of Bihar, was appointed in his place. The new ruler assumed charge of affairs some eight months later. He was of much better stuff than his predecessor. Honest, sincere, energetic and able, he combined tact with enthusiasm and sagacity with valour. One of his earliest acts was to intercede with the Mughal

* The *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* of Mirza Nathan is the most important authority for this topic. It alone illuminates the dark period of king Lakshmi Narayan's career subsequent to his release from the Mughal Court. Besides this work, occasional references to Koch-Mughal affairs of the last decade of Jahangir's reign may be found in the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*, the *Purani Asama Buranji* and other similar treatises as well as in Stephen Caccella's letter.

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Emperor for the release of Lakshmi Narayan and his reinstatement to power, on the ground of political expediency. He emphasised the steadfast loyalty and devotion of the Koch king as well as his faithful personal service in furtherance of the Mughal cause in Kamrup, and recommended him for a more favourable treatment. The Emperor soon acceded to the prayer of his favourite viceroy. Lakshmi Narayan was released from the gloomy exile, reinstated to his kingdom, and made to bask in the sunshine of royal favour.*

Lakshmi Narayan is released from detention (*c.* end of 1617).

Lakshmi Narayan did homage to Jahangir and presented 500 *muhrs* to him, while he was on tour in Gujrat (25th February, 1618.)† A dress of honour, an elephant, an *Iraki* horse, a special sword, a dagger and a belt, besides many pearls and jewels were conferred on the Koch king, and he was allowed leave to go to Bengal (*c.* 18th of March, 1618).‡ Lakshmi Narayan reached Jahangirnagar in due time, interviewed the *subahdar*, and spent some time there.¶

He visited Jahangirnagar.

After rotting in obscurity and confinement for about three years and a half in all, the Koch king got back his personal freedom and was reinstated to his own domain. But he was not destined to rule it in person any longer. At the end of the spring of 1618, a change in the personnel of the government of Kamrup took place. Shaikh Kamal, an old and experienced local officer, was appointed governor there by the Bengal viceroy. Anxious to utilise the expert local knowledge of men and affairs possessed by the Koch king, the new incumbent induced his chief to allow Lakshmi Narayan to help him with personal service in Kamrup, much in opposition to his

Whence he went to Hajo to render personal service in Kamrup.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 235a.

† *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* (Rogers and Beveridge's English translation, Vol. I. p. 443).

‡ *Ibid*, p. 444 : Vol. II. p. 2.

¶ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 235a.

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own wish. Shaikh Kamal made himself responsible for the due realisation of a *lakh* of rupees from the Koch king (probably as his annual tribute to the Mughal Exchequer), and thereby overcame the viceregal objections. By the middle of 1618, he came to Hajo, the headquarters, with Lakshmi Narayan in his company.*

His services to the Mughal cause (1618-1620).

Henceforward the ill-fated Koch ruler appears in a new role. Though he was the reigning king in Koch Bihar, he did not govern the country, which was left in charge of his son as before. An era of honourable exile from his kingdom now sets in. He continued to stay as a vassal king at Hajo, with a contingent of his troops, and aided the Imperialists in the task of gradual consolidation of their authority in *Uttarkol* and *Dakhinkol* regions. He does not appear to have taken the field in person, but he frequently placed his troops at the disposal of his colleagues, particularly Mirza Nathan, the astute and energetic *thanahdar* of *Dakhinkol*, with whom he was on terms of great intimacy.

In the beginning of September, 1619, when the Assamese, in aid of Raja Bali Narayan, Mamu Govinda and Shumarooed Kayeth, made a serious attack on some of Mirza Nathan's *thanahs* in *Dakhinkol* (Rani Hat, Minari, Haligaon, etc.,), Lakshmi Narayan sent a contingent of 40 cavalry and 300 *paiks* to Nathan's help.† But it was of no avail. The latter suffered a great reverse and was compelled to fly away, evacuating the *thanahs* altogether and leaving behind him immense war-equipments, including 35 horses of the Koch Bihar king.‡

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 235a-b. It is interesting to find that the *Purani Asama Buranji* (p. 197) confirms in a general way the truth of Mirza Nathan's detailed account of the advice and assistance given by Lakshmi Narayan to the Mughal officials in their administration of Kamrup.

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 258b.

‡ *Ibid*, pp. 263a-264b. The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and an old Assamese *Buranji* by the late Jajnaram Deodhai Barua refer to an interesting sequel to this defeat. Lakshmi Narayan is alleged to have carried on peace negotiations between the Assam king and the Mughals, through

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In January, 1620, Mirza Nathan recovered his lost prestige by a decisive victory over the Assamese host in *Dakhinkol*. While he was in the thick of this struggle, Lakshmi Narayan sent to his aid, his own cousin Ram Singh from Hajo, with adequate troops.*

Nothing further is known about Lakshmi Narayan till we come to the end of Ibrahim Khan Fathjang's viceroyalty.

Lakshmi Narayan joined the rebellious Prince Shah Jahan in Bengal.

The advent of the rebellious Prince Shah Jahan in Bengal and the defeat and destruction of the *subahdar* at the hands of his victorious army, in May, 1624, created a great confusion in Kamrup and affected also the fortune of the Koch king who had continued his residence at Hajo. Along with Mirza Nathan (now titled Shitab Khan) and other prominent local officers, Lakshmi Narayan went over to the side of the victorious rebel, forsaking the cause of the lawful Emperor Jahangir. † He undoubtedly desired to take advantage of the prevailing confusion in Imperial politics to escape from his enforced stay in Kamrup and to go back to his own kingdom. But his desire was not fulfilled. He remained at Hajo, and was the recipient of a *farman* in commendation of his services to the rebel cause.‡

After Shah Jahan's defeat, Lakshmi Narayan went back to the side of Jahangir and continued to stay at Hajo till his death.

When the star of Shah Jahan's fortune paled away after the decisive defeat at the battle on the river Tons, in November, 1624, and the rebel prince left Bengal finally, the Koch king, along with his colleagues in Kamrup, lost no time in rejoining the ranks of the old Emperor. Lakshmi

one Biroo Kazi. The *Purani Asama Buranji* does not name Lakshmi Narayan at all, but makes Biroo Kazi mediate between the two parties. The absence of any corroborative evidence on the point, supplied by the most exhaustive historian of the conflicts with the Assamese *i. e.*, Mirza Nathan, or by any other Persian writer, and the discrepancy in the accounts (particularly in the time-element) given in the various *Buranjis*, make me sceptical in accepting the incident as a historical fact.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 266a.

† *Ibid*, p. 298b.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 300a.

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Narayan did not swerve again from the path of loyalty, and served in Kamrup till his death, about the end of February, 1627,* his son Bir Narayan still continuing his rule as the heir-apparent.†

The death of Lakshmi Narayan, followed soon after by that of his suzerain, Jahangir, marked the end of the pacific and non-interfering phase of the Imperial policy in Koch

* A great deal of confusion exists with regard to the date of the death of Lakshmi Narayan. While the *Bansabali* and the Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis* are silent on the point, modern writers, *e.g.*, B. Hamilton, Hunter, and Gait suggest 1621-22 A. D. as the period of his demise, and this has hitherto found general acceptance. The testimony of Mirza Nathan, a friend and colleague of the Koch king, is clear that the latter was alive and saw service in Kamrup till June, 1624 (*Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 301b). The letter of the contemporary Jesuit traveller Stephen Cacella, who visited Koch Bihar and Kamrup, on his way to Bhutan, in the company of his friend John Cabral, in 1626-27 A. D. (C. Wessel's *Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia*, pp. 122, 123, 125) not only confirms the evidence of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* but carries the date of the death much forward. The Jesuit writer tells us that he and his companion arrived at Hajo from Dacca, on the 26th of September, 1626. The two friends then went to Pandu, whence, in company of Raja Satrajit, they came back to Hajo to enquire about the route to Bhutan from Lakshmi Narayan. The date of the interview with the latter is not given, but it must have been sometime between the 26th of September and the 8th of October, 1626, the day the travellers left Hajo for Bihar, the Koch capital.

The letter of Stephen Cacella, dated the 4th of October, 1627, mentions the Koch king as *now dead*. The event must have taken place sometime after the end of September, 1626, but before the 4th of October, 1627. We might be more precise and suggest that Lakshmi Narayan died subsequent to February 21, 1627. For, we are told that Cacella, with his friend, waited at the Koch capital till that date. The observant traveller would naturally have alluded to the death of the king if it had taken place at that time.

The truth of the Jesuit evidence seems to be corroborated by a reference to Lakshmi Narayan's demise in a passage of the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*, subsequent to the events of *Lakni Plekmit* (1626 A. D.). To sum up, the testimony of Mirza Nathan and Stephen Cacella, supported by that of the *Ahom Buranji*, is, in my opinion, conclusive that Lakshmi Narayan did not die in 1621-22 A. D., but continued to live at least up till the end of September, 1626, or probably till the end of February, 1627.

† C. Wessel's *Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia*, p. 125.

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Bihar. Totally preoccupied with the task of defence and consolidation of their power in Kamrup, the Mughals could not help adopting a conciliatory attitude towards the Koch state. So it is that Lakshmi Narayan was given back his personal freedom and reinstated to power. Though, owing to the exigencies of the political situation, he could not be spared to govern his territory in person, its integrity was now respected and it was allowed to be ruled in peace by the heir-apparent, according to the advice of the *de jure* king.

Section II. Kamrup under Mughal Rule (1612-1627).*

Significance of the conquest of Kamrup in the history of Mughal India.

The conquest of Kamrup added a new leaf to the history of Mughal India. A policy of benevolent intervention on behalf of a protege is gradually transformed into one of aggressive imperialism, which, carried to its logical conclusion, resulted in the territorial expansion of Mughal India in the north-eastern border. The victory over Parikshit

* In the list of original authorities for the early history of Mughal rule in Kamrup, Mirza Nathan's monumental work, the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, occupies the foremost place. From the time when the Mughal campaign began till the year 1625, Mirza Nathan served as one of the officers in Kamrup, and took a leading part in the consolidation of Imperial power there. He thus speaks with first-hand knowledge about the various difficulties lying in the way of the Mughal government, how they were sought to be overcome and with what success. More than one third of the whole Manuscript is devoted to the history of Kamrup under Mughal occupation, and it is needless to say that it has been my mainstay with regard to this section. The *Padishahnamah* gives only a very concise account of the early administrative arrangements in Kamrup. Of the native compilations, the *Bansabali* is of very little use here. It ends rather abruptly in the middle of a somewhat vague account of Parikshit's younger brother Bali Narayan's seeking refuge with the Ahom king, and of the latter's successful encounter with the "Bangals" (the Mughals) on behalf of his protege. The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Purani Asama Buranji* are of little value in this connection. Of the more modern *Buranjis*, those of Gunabhiram Barua and of Kashinath Phukan are silent on the point. The Jesuit traveller Stephen Cacella, however, throws some side light on the history of the times.

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left the Mughals master, though as yet nominal, of a large territory stretching from the Kari Bari hills on the south-west to the bank of the Bar Nadi on the east. It was the first north-east frontier province of Mughal India.

And in that of the north-east frontier policy.

Power begets responsibility, and the new position of authority led to a gradual transformation in Mughal outlook and policy in which the sobering influence of the Assam disaster was also clearly perceptible. From irresponsible conquerors the Mughals turned into serious administrators. The first flush of imperialism over, they realised the stakes they had in the rich and flourishing conquered tract and gradually settled down to organise and consolidate their authority there.

Which turned defensive and constructive.

A new phase of policy thus unfolds itself. It is essentially pacific, and is strictly defensive and constructive in character. Grave problems of administration now confronted the Mughals in their new domain, the history of which is a long-drawn story of the strenuous endeavour to stabilise their power in the teeth of the stout opposition offered by the native people, who were very often aided by the Ahoms.

Early difficulties of the Mughal government in Kamrup.

The capture of Dhubri and Gilah, the two strongholds of Parikshit, followed by his abject surrender with all his sons, did not however complete the conquest of Kamrup. The western part of the country only came under the grip of the Mughals who had yet to fight hard, for the extension and consolidation of their power over the rest, against the numerous Koch chieftains who were in no mood to submit to alien rule.

Besides the chaotic political condition, various other difficulties faced the Mughals. One was the physical geography of the country. On the west lay the extensive *parganah* of Khonthaghat, the plague spot of the realm, occupying the north bank of the Brahmaputra and stretching up to the mouth of the Manas. It was studded with dense forests, and the small hillocks within

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it, which skirted the banks of the Brahmaputra, afforded an easy shelter to the rebel Koches. As it was the border region, the rebels could easily cross over to Koch Bihar, eluding the chase of the Mughal army. Again, the entire region south of the Brahmaputra, from the Kari Bary hills right up to Pandu, was jungly and hilly, the hills gradually rising higher and higher till they merged themselves in the Garo and the Khasia ranges. It was another hotbed of sedition. Moreover, the numerous pools and streams with which the country was dotted, caused no small inconvenience to the Imperialists in the preservation of peace and order. For, the fleet, which was their mainstay, could not ply in them and was fit only for the deep waters of the Brahmaputra and its main tributaries.

The climatic condition of Kamrup was also a disquieting factor. The rainy season lasted for about 8 months in a year. The roads then became impassable for the Mughal cavalry and the elephants, while the marshes and quagmires were pitfalls for the infantry. At the top of these troubles came the bitter rivalry and jealousy and the incessant petty strifes and also the rapacity of the Imperial officers. Distance from the viceregal seat (Jahangirnagar), nepotism of the *subahdars*, their whims and caprices, and the absence of a continuity of administrative policy were the other factors which made efficient and stable government impossible in Kamrup.

These circumstances, together with the innate defects of the Mughal administrative system, explain the peculiar nature of the Kamrup government. The Mughals remained in Kamrup like an army of occupation, the basis of their rule being essentially military.* Collection of revenue, suppression of local insurrections and the conduct of *khedah* operations seem to have been the main aims of the Mughal government.

Nature of Mughal rule and its aims.

* The chief officer of the new realm is very often termed by Mirza Nathan as "the commander (*sardar*) of the Imperial army in Koch." He remained in a fortified station and appointed *thanahdars* in various important places to put down local disturbances created by the Koch chiefs and the rebellious officers.

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The administrative machinery.

The administrative machinery was necessarily a tentative one. Though, by its strategic position, Kamrup held the key to the territorial expansion of Mughal India in the north-east, it was not even made a *sarkar* by itself, but was probably included in that of Ghoraghat, thus forming part of the Bengal *subah*.* At the head of the administration was a military governor. He was assisted by a *diwan*, whose office was invariably combined with that of the *bakshi* and *waqia-navis*. While the governor and the *diwan* remained at the headquarters and were really responsible for the entire administration, work was actually carried on by a few subordinate officials and by the lessees of the *parganahs*, which were the real governmental units. It appears that the greater part of the province was either assigned as *jagirs* to the leading officers or entrusted to collectors of revenue, styled as the *kroris*, who, along with the *faujdars*, were directly responsible for the maintenance of peace and order. Territories were often farmed out to private individuals on lease. Sometimes a particular *parganah* was taken away from the hands of a *krori* and handed over to a lessee, and a lessee was often replaced by a *krori*. The office of the *krorī* and that of the *faujdar* was not infrequently combined in one person. The whole province was effectively safeguarded by means of *thanahs* or military outposts.

Much confusion prevails with regard to the early history of the Mughal rule in Kamrup.† It appears that a twofold

* The *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* (p. 171b) tells us that Shaikh Ibrahim was appointed to the *kotwali* of Ghoraghat and selected as the *krori* for the whole of Kamrup by Qasim Khan.

† From Buchanan Hamilton's Account of Rangpur (Martin's Eastern India, Vol. III, p. 417) we learn that on Parikshit's sudden death on his way to Agra, his minister proceeded to the Royal Court to regain possession of the country, which had in the meantime been occupied by the Muslims in order to recover the money that had been promised by the Raja. After some trouble, Parikshit's minister was appointed *qanungo* of the whole country which was divided into four *sarkars—Uttarkol*, *Dakhinkol* and "*Banggal-bhumi* west of the Brohmoputro, and Kamrup proper, called so as containing

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arrangement was at first made for purposes of administration. The territories to the west of the river Manas were placed in charge of Abdu-s salam, brother of Mukarram Khan, the conqueror of Kamrup, while those to the east of the river (comprising Kamrup proper) were placed temporarily under the adminstrative control of the Koch Bihar king Lakshmi Narayan. A strong navy was stationed

Twofold administrative division at the beginning.

Gohati, the most ancient capital of the country." The brother of Parikshit (Bali Narayan) was confirmed in his government of Darrang, and Chandra Narayan and the son of the unfortunate Raja and also the new *qanungo* received very large estates. Further, according to Mr. Hamilton, "A Mogul general (Fouzdar) resided at Ranggamati, and the country is said, for many years to have undergone considerable improvements, especially under the government of a certain noble Hindu named Mano Singho."

Hunter (Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. VII. p. 316), Robinson (Descriptive Account of Assam, p. 156) and Gunabhiram Barua (Assam *Buranji*, p. 76) give an almost identical account of the Mughal administrative arrangements in Kamrup. Robinson adds however that "Balit Naraiyan was confirmed in his government of a portion of his brother's domains, extending from the Dikrai on the east, to the Manah Nadi on the west; whilst on the unfortunate son of the Raja, Bijut Naraiyan, was conferred a large estate extending from the Manah Nadi on the east, to the Sankos on the west." From Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam, we learn that "after the death of Parikshit, the king of Delhi appointed *Chowdhurys* to the va rious districts into which Kamrup was divided. The *Kazees* of the province were appointed *Chowdhurys*, and Mukarram was posted as *thanahdar*." Gait (History of Assam, p. 66) gives, in a rather vague and inaccurate manner, the gist of the exhaustive chronicle of Mirza Nathan, whom he erroneously terms as Mirza Sahin.

The detailed narrative of Nathan enables us to supplement as well as to correct the various accounts hitherto current regarding Mughal rule in Kamrup. Mirza Nathan does not tell us anywhere of the appointment of Parikshit's minister as *qanungo* of the country or of its eventual division into four *sarkars*. Nor does he mention the bestowal of territories on Parikshit's son, all of which (omitted in the *Padishahnamah* as well) may well be dismissed as myths. As regards Bali Narayan, the suggestion which is sought to have been made that he was the recipient of territorial favour from the Mughals, appears, on the face of it, to be absurd. The Persian works, the *Bansabali* and the *Buranjis* all agree that he was their sworn enemy, and, that he took shelter with the Ahom king, by whom he was installed as a feudatory chief in Darrang.

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at Pandu to secure the line of communication with Bengal as well as to put down rebellion and sedition in the riverain districts. *

One of the earliest acts of Qasim Khan, the Bengal viceroy, was the treacherous confinement of Lakshmi Narayan and Parikshit Narayan at Jahangirnagar. The former's dream of holding sway over the tract lying to the east of the river Sankosh having thus been rudely dispelled, the whole of the conquered tract was brought under the direct administration of the Mughal Emperor. The next act was the formal confirmation of Abdu-s salam to the office of the commandant in Kamrup, and the appointment of Mirza Hasan Meshedi as the *diwan* and *bakshi* there.† Gilah, the favourite resort of Parikshit, became the seat of the Mughal government,‡ and was named after the reigning sovereign as Jahangirabad *alias* Gilahni (obviously a variant of *Gilahnau* or new Gilah).

Abdu-s salam, the first governor, and Mirza Hasan Meshedi, the first *diwan*.

The first governor stationed his troops at different places round the capital, including Rangamati. The *diwan* made an assessment of the *pargânahs* and appointed *kroris* and *faujdars* in them, while certain places were leased out to trusty persons, on suitable security. § Muhammad Zaman was the first *krori* of *parganah* Khonthaghat. The place abounded in wild elephants and offered an excellent site for *khedah* work. As has already been remarked, its peculiar physical features made it a very vulnerable spot in the whole country. The first insurrection which broke out there was caused by the tyranny

Their activities in *Uttarkul*.

* It is necessary to point out in passing that the *Padishahnamah* errs when it makes Qasim Khan appoint Mukarram Khan as the governor of Hajo, for, the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* tells us quite clearly that Abdu-s salam was the person selected.

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 146b.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 147a.

§ *Ibid.*

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of Muhammad Zaman. He was soon removed from office,* and three persons followed him in quick succession.

From a geographical standpoint, the new realm was divided into two parts—*Uttarkol*, the region north of the Brahmaputra, and *Dakhinkol*, the tract south of that river. While Gilahni and Rangamati were the fortified strongholds of the Mughals in *Uttarkol*, the necessity for subjugating *Dakhinkol* also was early brought home to them. So Abdu-s salam appointed Mirza Yusuf Barlas for that purpose.†

And in *Dakhinkol*.

The change in the Bengal viceroyalty gave rise to a corresponding change in the personnel of the Kamrup government. Qasim Khan, who was tactless, unprincipled and wayward, deputed Abdul Baki, a brother of his favourite officer Abdul Nabi, to inspect the troops in Kamrup, and ordered him to send back all the experienced local officers, including Mirza Nathan and Raja Satrajit.‡ But this order does not appear to have been complied with. The old *diwan* and *bakshi* was next transferred and Mir Safi appointed in his place. Shaikh Basutan, son of Afzal Khan, was at this time deputed to assist Abdu-s salam.§

Governmental changes in Kamrup.

The zealous but indiscreet new *diwan* made alterations in the old terms of rent assessment in the *parganahs* of Jahangirabad, with a view to increasing the state revenue. The land grants of the *paiks* were also cancelled, and the tract east of the Manas entrusted to the *kroris* and lessees of his own choice. The result was a great popular commotion. Fortunately, the viceroy intervened and restored the old order of things. In the interest of public service, the *diwan* was

And their result.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 147a.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid*, p. 152a.

§ *Ibid*, p. 152b.

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removed and Mir Ali Beg appointed in his place.* Meanwhile four officers were promoted to the rank of *mansabdars* by the Mughal Emperor, in recognition of their meritorious service in connection with the conquest of Kamrup. They were—Mukarram Khan, Imam Quli Beg Shamlu, Shaikh Kamal and Mirza Nathan.†

Owing to personal enmity between Abdu-s salam and Abdul Baki, the news of the confinement of Parikshit, an act of black treachery and a naked violation of solemn promise and good faith, now leaked out in Kamrup and led to a grave political disorder there. At the instigation of some local Koch chiefs, an insurrection broke out in Khonthaghat region, as a result of which, some officials were killed. Abdu-s salam sent an officer from Gilahni to quell the rising.‡ Though he attained a temporary success, the rash and conceited fellow proceeded far into the disturbed area without caring for adequate reinforcements, and was soon overpowered by the rebels. An officer of Abdul Baki, who was sent to his succour, also met with the same fate.§

Rebellion in Khonthaghat.

These repeated reverses thoroughly unnerved the officials at Gilahni, who began to strengthen its fortifications as well as those of Rangamati, in self-defence. But before they could finish their task, the rebels suddenly captured Rangamati, and followed it up by the erection of a fort commanding the mouth of the river Gadadhar on which Gilahni stood, thus placing it under a siege.‖ Though a surprise attack upon the capital city failed, the enemy, by their plundering depredations, effectively obstructed food supply to the inhabitants and thereby reduced them to great straits.

Its initial success—Fort Rangamati captured and Gilahni threatened.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 152b.
† *Ibid*, p. 156b.
‡ *Ibid*, pp. 154a.
§ *Ibid*, pp. 157a-158a.
‖ *Ibid*, pp. 158a-158b.

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The Mughals suffered a loss in *Dakhinkol* as well. Mirza Yusuf Barlas who was posted there, was soon brought to a sad plight. Threatened with starvation, he hastily evacuated his charge and succeeded in escaping to Gilahni with a handful of men, owing to the pluck of Mirza Nathan only.* Mir Abdur Razzak Shirazi who had been sent to recapture the fort of Rangamati, fared no better. Frightened by the numerical strength of the rebels, he dared not take the offensive, and, what was worse, allowed himself to be harassed by them.†

Mughal reverses in *Dakhinkol*.

The discomfiture of the Mughals was heightened by division in their own ranks—the resultant of mutual rivalry and ill-will. Personal enmity between Mirza Nathan and Abdul Baki was on the increase and this made concerted action impossible.‡ To remedy this, Qasim Khan sent an able, tactful and experienced officer, Imam Quli Beg Shamlu, with unfettered command over the affairs in Kamrup (early in September, 1614).§ Still petty jealousy, and heart-burning lingered on. Abdul Baki and Mirza Nathan now composed their mutual differences, and united themselves together by a common bond of hostility towards the new official who was sent to supersede them.‖

Internal dissensions add to the trouble.

Notwithstanding this rift in the Imperial camp, an energetic endeavour was soon made to put down the troubles. Leaving Abdu-s salam with a garrison of more than 800 cavalry for the protection of Gilahni, and posting Mir Abdur Razzak Shirazi with more than 200 cavalry and 300 musketeers to watch over the mouth of the Gadadhar river so as to prevent a naval attack on the same, Mirza Imam Quli Beg, in company of Mirza Nathan and Abdul

Arrival of a new officer improves matters—revolters defeated and Rangamati evacuated.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 158b.
† *Ibid*, p. 159a.
‡ *Ibid*, p. 159b.
§ *Ibid*, p. 161b.
‖ *Ibid*, pp. 162a-b.

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Baki, marched forward, at the head of 1500 cavalry, 1700 matchlockmen and 30 elephants, towards Guma *pargunah** to face the rebels (*c.* last week of September, 1614).† At Dalgaon,‡ the Mughal commander encountered the rebels and thoroughly defeated them in a series of engagements (*c.* beginning of October, 1614).§ Alarmed at the news of these reverses, the revolters evacuated Rangamati fort, which Mir Abdur Razzak Shirazi at once reoccupied.‖

The victorious Mughals then decided to cross over to Lakshmi Narayan's realm in order to put down the dying embers of revolt therein. From Dalgaon they marched towards fort Guma. Leaving an adequate garrison there, they moved forward, crossed the river Sankosh, and reached Jaypur or Jaygarh,¶ one of the ancient forts of the Koch realm. They strengthened its fortifications, and, from it as the base of operations, chased the rebels of the surrounding region so hard as to overpower them thoroughly (*c.* December, 1614).$

Insurrection in Koch Bihar also put down (*c.* December, 1614.)

Some noteworthy changes now took place in the Kamrup government. Abdul Baki was appointed to be the commander of the Imperial army in place of Mirza Imam Quli Beg Shamlu. At this time Abdu-s salam, all on a sudden, departed from Gilahni, leaving it entirely unprotected, in order to join his brother Mukarram Khan.₱

Governmental changes in Kamrup.

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* Guma Duar forms part of the western frontier of the modern Goalpara District, and lies between Repu Duar on the north and Ghurla *parganah* to the south.

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 163a.

‡ Dalagram, a village in Gola Alamganj *mauza*, *thanah* Dhubri, is probably meant.

§ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 163b.

‖ *Ibid*, p. 164a.

¶ Rennell's Map No. 5 shows "Joygong" about 25 miles to the north of "Byher", the new town.

$ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 164b-165a.

₱ *Ibid*, p. 165b.

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Meantime fresh troubles were brewing in the Khonthaghat region. A number of non-combatants belonging to the Mughal commissariat department were suddenly attacked and molested in "Kindkudi" and "Badhantarah", by a rebel chief, "Haman Raja Tajha", who soon retired to his stronghold in Pathamari fort.*

Fresh outbreak in Khonthaghat.

Anxious for the security of Gilahni, Abdul Baki entrusted one of his officers, named Mirza Saleh Arghun, with the charge of the fort there, as well as with that of the suppression of the enemy depredations in Khonthaghat. Mirza Saleh met with initial success. He took Pathamari† fort by assault from the hands of the rebel Raja. But owing to the numerical inferiority of his forces and the dearth of provisions, he was soon reduced to such a sad plight that he was compelled to give up his new prize and retire to the Imperialist stronghold of Badhasahra.‡ He then earnestly appealed for more men and provisions to Abdul Baki, the new governor of Kamrup. Internal dissensions again spoilt the Mughal cause. Mirza Imam Quli Beg Shamlu and Shaikh Basutan refused to co-operate with Abdul Baki even at this crisis, and adopted an attitude of absolute indifference to the Imperial affairs.§

At last Mirza Nathan, straight from a sick-bed, came to save the situation (*c.* end of February, 1615). Abdul Baki himself stayed on at Gilahni for its protection, and sent Mirza Nathan with adequate men, elephants and munition to the succour of Mirza Saleh Arghun.‖

Quelled by Mirza Nathan.

From Gilahni, Mirza Nathan marched to Rangamati and thence encamped on the bank of the Little Sankosh. Here he

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 169b.

† Rennell's Map No. 5 shows "Putymari" about 7 or 8 miles south-west of Dhubri.

‡ "Binnasera", about 7 or 8 miles south-west of Putymari (*vide* Rennell's Map No. 5), is obviously the place referred to.

§ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 170a.

‖ *Ibid*, pp. 170b-171a.

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was apprised of the depredations of another Koch rebel, Nobar Raja* by name, in Kind-Kudi region. He at once gave the Raja a hard chase, but the latter retired to his hilly stronghold of Koar.† Nathan then joined Mirza Saleh at Badhasahra, which was soon strongly garrisoned. Under Mirza Nathan's advice, Mirza Saleh next crossed the river Khanpur‡ and suddenly attacked the rebels in Pathamari fort. Most of them were put to the sword, and the rest moved to the more secure hill fort of Takonia,§ where Mirza Saleh Arghun pursued them. This stronghold was next captured.‖ Unable to make a stand anywhere, Nobar Raja sought shelter in Koch Bihar territory, whence he was handed over to the Imperialists.

More outbreaks and their failure.

The capture of Nobar Raja ended the troubles of the Khonthaghat region for a time. An outpost was established at Rangalikhata,¶ and a *krori* and a *karkun* were posted to the *parganah* of Khonthaghat. Mirza Nathan himself was stationed at Pathamari fort which stood in the heart of the disaffected area.$ During the rains (*c.* August-September, 1615), the people of Pathamari again rose in rebellion, and stopped payment of the land-revenue. Mirza Nathan, who had meanwhile been entrusted with the pacification of Khonthaghat and had been lying ill at Kharbojaghat, ₱ sent his trusty Hindu

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* Perhaps "Nadooria Raja", one of the nine subordinate chiefs under the Ahom king (according to Dr. Wade) is here meant.

† Pao Kumari hill, about 22 miles north-west of the modern Goalpara town, is probably the place.

‡ The Khanpur river flows through Khonthaghat into the Brahmaputra (*vide* JASB, 1872, Part 1. p. 60).

§ Tokua in the modern Habraghat *mauza*, District Goalpara, is obviously meant.

‖ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 174a-174b.

¶ The Goalpara Village Directory, p. 6 mentions Rangali-Khata, a village in Khuntaghat *mauza*.

$ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 175a.

₱ The Goalpara Village Directory, p. 27 mentions Kharboja in Mechpara *mauza*.

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officer Bal Bahadur Das, with adequate men, to put down the revolt. The latter encountered the enemy entrenched on the bank of a *nalah* at the foot of a hill in Kind-Kudi, and put them to flight. * Nothing daunted, more than 12000 archers and matchlockmen on the rebel side, launched, a fortnight after (*c.* October, 1615), a vigorous night-attack on the garrison at Pathamari. After three unsuccessful attempts to dash into the fort, they retreated.†

Thus it appears that for more than two years after the expulsion of Parikshit from his realm, the Mughals were wholly occupied with the task of consolidating their authority over the region to the west of the river Manas. Although *de jure* rulers of the entire tract, the effective control of the Mughals, during these early years, did not extend much beyond Jahangirabad and Rangamati, as their incessant hostility with the rebels of the Khonthaghat region clearly indicates.

Early Mughal activities in Kamrup proper.

The scene of activity soon changes, and the centre of political gravity shifts gradually from the Khonthaghat region to the territories east of the Manas river (*i.e.*, Kamrup proper). The most important feature in the early history of that region is the elaborate war-preparations of the Mughals against the Assamese. As early as October, 1614, we find the Bengal viceroy Qasim Khan, deputing Sayyid Abu Bakr, one of the faithful feudatory zamindars, to Kamrup, in order to help the local officials in quelling the insurrections rampant there, prior to taking up his main task of fighting the Ahom king. Abu Bakr reached Kamrup, rendered effective aid in putting down the risings, and then turned his attention towards the proper government of the place.

The administration in Kamrup proper partook of the same stop-gap nature as was prevalent in the region west of the Manas. The whole tract was entrusted to one *krori*, and Abdul Nabi, a

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 176a.

† *Ibid.*

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trusty officer of Qasim Khan, was the first to be appointed to that post. He was succeeded about the beginning of 1615 by Shaikh Ibrahim. Barnagar, * which was the seat of Parikshit's government, was given up by the Mughals as an unsuitable place. For, the Manas river, on which it stood, was not navigable all the year round. Further, as Mirza Nathan tells us, the Brahmaputra, into which the Manas flowed, was also rather shallow in that region, and the government ran an additional risk of losing touch with the fleet. The headquarters were accordingly shifted to Hajo, which occupied a more central and strategic position, standing on an affluent of the Brahmaputra, and within easy reach of Pandu where the Imperial fleet was stationed. † The next act of Sayyid Abu Bakr was the establishment of fortified *thanahs* for the administration of the region. One such *thanah* was made at Barnagar and a second one at Dhamdhama. ‡ Leaving behind Shaikh Ibrahim, the *krori*, Sayyid Abu Bakr next started for the Assam campaign (*c.* August-September, 1615). From Hajo he moved to Kohhata, and there recalled the garrisons from the *thanahs* around to strengthen his ranks, praying at the same time for more help from the Bengal *subahdar*.

Headquarters shifted from Barnagar to Hajo, and great preparations for the conquest of Assam made.

The withdrawal of the garrisons from the *thanahs* of Kamrup was the signal for the outbreak of a formidable insurrection, under an able Koch chieftain, named Sonatan. With the fort of Dhamdhama as his stronghold, he made a bold bid for independence in the region east of the Manas. Shaikh Ibrahim, unable to cope with him, appealed for assistance to Qasim Khan.§

* According to the *Padishahnamah*, "Budhnagar" was situated on the bank of the Manas river. This "Budhnagar" is obviously the "Barnagar" of Mirza Nathan, its modern counterpart being located at a distance of 7 or 8 miles from Barpeta in the direction of Raha.

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 171b.

‡ Dumdumah is about 8 miles north of Nalbari *thanah* (north of Gohain Kamala Ali) and about 10 miles west of Bydergarh, District Kamrup.

§ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 179a.

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The repeated requests for reinforcement from Sayyid Abu Bakr, led the Bengal viceroy, at this stage, to direct Abdul Baki at Gilahni to proceed to Kamrup and join in the Assam enterprise. Abdul Baki, in his turn, sought the co-operation of Mirza Nathan, who was stationed at Kharbojaghat, as the officer-in-charge of the Khonthaghat region. It was decided that the former, with the Imperial fleet, would move (from Gilahni) along the Brahmaputra up to its confluence with the Manas, where Mirza Nathan, with the land army and the elephants, would join him, and the two together would then proceed to Barnagar. *

Abdul Baki and Mirza Nathan marched to Kamrup to reinforce the Assam expeditionary force.

But this plan did not work owing to Abdul Baki's duplicity. Mirza Nathan's march by land route was interrupted in front of the defile of Kotal, † by some Koch rebels of Khonthaghat, and he reached the appointed place only to find that Abdul Baki had already left, instead of awaiting his arrival there. Abdul Baki, on his part, had to face a determined opposition from some miscreants of Khonthaghat, who, stationed in a fort on the hilly bank of the Brahmaputra at Kaorhadah, ‡ greatly harassed, with stones and arrows, the movement of the fleet, which was unassisted by the land army. After a great deal of hard fighting, the Imperialist army as well as the fleet at last reached Barnagar severally. §

While at Barnagar, urgent appeals for succour reached the Mughal commanders from Shaikh Ibrahim, who had been hard pressed by the rebel chief Sonatan. This diverted them for a time from their original aim of reinforcing the Mughal contingent deputed for the Assam war. Abdul Baki

Rebellion of the Koch chief Sonatan at Dhamdhama.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 179a.

† Kataldi in Chapar *mauza*, *thanah* Bagribari, Dt. Goalpara, is probably meant.

‡ The Goalpara District Gazetteer, p. 100 locates Kharuyabadh as a place south of the Brahmaputra.

§ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* pp. 177b-178b.

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and Mirza Nathan now decided to join hands with Shaikh Ibrahim in disarming Sonatan and capturing the fort of Dhamdhama. Leaving a detachment of 100 horse and 200 matchlockmen, under Malik Abdul Gafur, to guard the fort of Barnagar, and despatching the Imperial fleet, under Mirza Yusuf Barlas, towards Hajo, Abdul Baki, Mirza Nathan and Shaikh Ibrahim, with the remaining force, marched upon Dhamdhama. Sona Ghazi, zamindar of Sarail, who was on his way to join Sayyid Abu Bakr, also co-operated in the attack on the rebel fort.*

Division of opinion amongst the Mughal commanders at first boded ill for their cause. An isolated attempt upon the stronghold of Sonatan having proved futile, the Imperialists had recourse to peaceful negotiations, under Mirza Nathan's advice. Asked to ventilate his grievances, Sonatan first charged them with breach of faith regarding the treatment of the Rajas Lakshmi Narayan and Parikshit Narayan. He then prayed for the punishment of Shaikh Ibrahim for his exactions and oppressions, sought exemption from land-revenue payment for a year, and appealed for the distribution of the emoluments of the *paiks* to themselves as well as for the withdrawal of the garrisons to Gilahni.†

Peace-measures attempted but failed.

The terms advocated by the Koch rebel are a sad commentary upon Mughal policy and its working in Kamrup. Examined in a dispassionate way, it is difficult to characterise them as altogether unacceptable, though the last item might well be taken exception to. It seems clear that the treacherous confinement of the two Koch kings was a rankling sore in the heart of their subjects. The tyranny and misrule of responsible local officials like Shaikh Ibrahim, appears to have been another potent cause of popular grievance. Not less burdensome and impolitic was the forfeiture of the remuneration of the *paiks* to the state.

The pacific overtures broke down, as the stipulations put forward by Sonatan were deemed extravagant by the Imperial

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 179a-180a.

† *Ibid*, p. 181b.

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officers. They next decided to take the fort of Dhamdhama by storm. In four divisions, the Imperial host advanced towards it, under cover of artificial barriers (*saibahs*) and amidst the shower of arrows and gun-shots, till they reached the ditch round the fort-wall. In the darkness of night, it was then filled up with grass and plantain trees. As the elephants were about to cross it over, the Koches got scent and forced them to retreat.* An attempt to take the fort by the rear as well as to cut off its food supply, was next made by Mirza Nathan. To counteract this, Sonatan made a small stockade blocking Nathan's path of communication, which the Mughals, in three detachments, vigorously attacked. Though Sonatan offered a brilliant defence and made a great havoc on the Imperialist ranks, he was ultimately compelled to give way, with the loss of about 1000 of his men. The fall of the stockade sealed the fate of Sonatan's main fort. His food supply and munition soon ran short, and he was compelled to evacuate it one night, with the remnant of his troops. Thus Dhamdhama fell into the hands of the Mughals, after a protracted siege of four months and a half (*c.* middle of September, 1615, to the end of January, 1616).†

Mughal attack on Dhamdhama fort and its capture after four months and a half's siege (*c.* end of Janaury, 1616).

Not to speak of the pacification of Kamrup, the capture of Dhamdhama did not mean even the submission of Sonatan. He retired to the fort of Jootiah, ‡ securely located in the midst of a dense jungle, and there prepared for a fresh trial of strength with his opponents. The Mughals, in their turn, decided to follow up their success by attacking Sonatan's new stronghold, in spite of Mirza Nathan's repeated advice to give up the project and to hasten to the aid of Sayyid Abu Bakr. The fort of Jootiah was soon reached and a light

Mughal attempt upon Jootiah fort.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 182a-b.

† *Ibid*, pp. 184b-185a.

‡ Gatia Kuchi, about 4 miles south-east of Nalbari, is probably here referred to.

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skirmish with the rebel followed, when the news of the disastrous Assam campaign reached the Mughals. *

The defeat and discomfiture of the mighty Mughal host in Assam, early in 1616, was an event of far-reaching importance, and it reacted severely on the fortunes of Imperial Kamrup. In the first trial of strength with the Assamese, the Mughals had gone down, with great loss of men and moral prestige. A great panic and despair seized them. Hajo, the capital, was soon threatened with attack, and Imperial authority in Kamrup was shaken to its very foundation.

Given up at the news of the disastrous defeat of Sayyid Abu Bakr in Assam.

The whole plan of action was at once changed. The attack on Jootiah fort was given up, and Sonatan, in his rebellious mood, was left to himself. The contingents under Abdul Baki and Mirza Nathan hastened to Madhupur, † crossed the river Barlia, and moved to Hajo to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Ahoms. Reaching there, on the 28th of January, 1616,‡ to the immense relief of Mirza Yusuf Barlas and his men, their first task was to rally together the fugitive and the wounded compeers. They proceeded in their boats towards Kohhata, § and thence to the confluence of the Kalang river with the Brahmaputra, and there, by a beat of drum, collected about 1700 of their men. An attempt to attack an impregnable stronghold of the enemy, Sangari ‖ by name, having been given up

Mirza Nathan and Abdul Baki proceeded to Hajo, rallied together their fugitive comrades and prepared for the defence of the capital and the places around.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 188a.

† Madhupur is about 5 miles south-west of Nalbari, Dt. Kamrup. The river Borlea Sota flows about 12 miles south-east of Madhupur and 4 miles north-west of Hajo.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 189b.

§ The *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 89, mentions Kohhata as having once been a large and populous town on an elevated spot in *Uttarkol*, midway between Srighat and Kajali. It may roughly be identified with the modern Kahara on the river Bar Nadi (Kamrup District Map).

‖ Changari is in Sila Sindurighopa *mauza*, Dt. Kamrup. It is hilly and studded with jungles.

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as impracticable, the relieving party returned to Hajo *via* Kohhata. * Their next task was to strengthen the *thanahs* round the capital. Mirza Yusuf Barlas was posted to Barnagar, Mirza Saleh Arghun to Dhamdhama, while Mir Abdur Razzak Shirazi and Seth Hriday Ram, with the entire fleet of the Bengal zamindars, were stationed at Pandu. Shaik Ibrahim was allowed to retain his old post of *krori* for the whole realm. †

Appearance of Raja Bali Narayan in Kamrup, and its significance.

A new enemy now appears on the scene in the person of "Baldeo" or Bali Narayan, the younger brother of Parikshit Narayan. After the defeat and capture of Parikshit, Bali Narayan sought refuge with the Ahom king, who installed him as a tributary ruler in Darrang (with the name of Dharma Narayan). From this time till his death (1638), he was the most persistent enemy of the Mughal peace in Kamrup, and was a night-mare to the *thanahdars* there. Strengthened by the enormous resources of the Ahom king, he made many a daring raid upon Kamrup.

In fact, the history of Mughal Kamrup, subsequent to the year 1616, is one long tale of the persistent attempts made by Bali Narayan to subvert Imperial authority there. Sometimes by open attack, sometimes by secret help offered to the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol*, he kept the Mughals in a state of perpetual alarm and insecurity, and his influence was perceptible in almost every rising of his time. Patriotic and ambitious, patient and audacious, he combined in himself caution and energy, personal valour and diplomatic tact, and waged a noble fight to rid his ancestral domain of foreign domination. Almost every page of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* attests to his skilful leadership, crafty strategy and military genius. Like the great Rajput hero, Rana Pratap of Chitor, he refused to bow down to the Imperial authority, and held his head high as long as he lived, though relentlessly pursued through the hills and dales of Kamrup and Darrang.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 191b.-192a.

† *Ibid*, p. 192b.

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Taking advantage of the weakness engendered by the Assam disaster, Bali Narayan, with his able Brahmin minister Ganesh Narayan, openly challenged Imperial authority in Kamrup, from his stronghold of Sahorabari in Darrang.* As the safety of the whole realm was jeopardised, Raja Satrajit and Jahan Khan Pani were sent with 500 matchlockmen to the aid of Shaikh Ibrahim *krorí*. In this, the first encounter, which ensued, Bali Narayan failed to achieve success. Three of his small stockades were captured, and he had to seek safety in flight, giving up his main post as well.†

Bali Narayan's first attack on Kamrup proved futile.

Meantime Sonatan, the Koch chief, too had not been slow to make capital out of the disturbed state of affairs and resume hostile operations against the Mughals. He attacked the *thanah* of Barnagar (*c.* August-September, 1616) and was about to overpower the garrison there, by means of his superior numbers, when the arrival of timely help saved it. Raja Satrajit and Shaikh Ibrahim who had come to reinforce the *thanahdar*, made a combined attack on Sonatan and put him to flight.‡ The respite which the Imperialists now got, was utilised by them in fortifying the frontier tracts facing Darrang and Sahorabari on the east, and Baksha Duar § on the north.

Koch chief Sonatan rebelled once again but was put down.

Meantime (early in January, 1616) Mukhlis Khan was appointed to the combined office of *diwan* and *bakshi* of the Bengal *subah*, which were severally held by Mirza Husain Beg and Tahir Muhammad. ‖ The new *diwan* sent his own

Governmental changes in Bengal and Kamrup.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 194b. Robinson's Map shows Sorabari, a *mauza* in District Darrang, four miles away from the bank of the Bar Nadi.

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 195a.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ In Robinson's Map, "Banksa Dooar" is the forest region occupying the northern part of Kamrup.

‖ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* p, 187a : *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* (Rogers and Beveridge's translation, Vol I. p. 306).

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nominee, Mir Ghiyasu-ddin Mahmud, as the *diwan*, *bakshi* and *waqia-navis* to Hajo.

For about four years from the middle of 1616, the history of Kamrup attains an internal consistency of its own. It is one long story of the dogged tenacity and unwearied enterprise of the Mughals to extend and consolidate their power over *Dakhinkol* region. The field of activity now definitely changed from the region north of the Brahmaputra to that on the south. The hero of this interesting and eventful period is Mirza Nathan, whose daring initiative, great energy, patience, tact and personal valour were now displayed to the best advantage. It is not probably too much to say that the history of Mughal Kamrup of this time is the history of his unwearied activities, and, that to him, more than any one else, is to be attributed the successful establishment of the Imperial authority in *Dakhinkol*.

Mughal activity in *Dakhinkol*, from 1616 onwards, turns round Mirza Nathan's brilliant career.

Before I proceed to the details of warfare in the new region, I would propose to give a short sketch of its political geography. The Mughal sphere of influence in the region south of the Brahmaputra, extended at this time from the Kari Bari Hills on the south-west, up to Pandu on the south-east. The physical geography of this region made it easy to defend, but difficult to conquer and consolidate. Taking from the extreme west, it included the territories now covered by the *parganahs* of Karaibari, Jamira, Mechpara and Habraghat, which were interspersed with hillocks and thick jungles, and were shut in between the Brahmaputra on the north, and the Rajebella and the Rangjuli Hills, offshoots of the Garos, to the south. The authority of the Mughals was at first only nominally established over this tract. Their chief enemies, according to Mirza Nathan, were Shumarooed of the Kayestha caste, whose strongholds were Amjunga and Rangjuli forts, and Parsuram, whose control was effective over "Sanbor *parganah*", Solmari and Rangdan.

Political geography of *Dakhinkol*.

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The territories comprised within *Dakhinkol*, further to the east, were also marked by the same physical features. From the Nagarberra Hills eastward, the country south of the Brahmaputra is hilly and jungly, and is intersected by small rivers. The *Duars*, which are "lands adjacent to the passes into the hills," are the peculiar features of this region. In the extreme south, the hills rise higher and higher till they merge themselves in the Khasia and the Khairam ranges. The more prominent enemies of the Mughals here, were Mamu Govinda, Shumarooed Kayeth and Jadu Naik, besides numerous petty hill-chiefs. But the arch enemy in *Dakhinkol* as a whole, was Bali Narayan of Darrang (who was invariably supported by his suzerain).

Hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol*—their names.

The territories of the hill-chiefs* were the first object of attack of the Mughals. Mirza Nathan makes a two-fold division of them—those of the lower and those of the upper hills ("*lamdani*" and "*oprah*" Rajas). The most powerful chieftain

* Mirza Nathan's list of the hill-Rajas does not always tally with that furnished by the modern writers—Dr. Wade, Rev. Robinson, Mr. Martin *etc.* While Nathan gives us a general list of eighteen vassal chiefs of the Ahom monarch, Martin (Eastern India, Vol. III. p. 619-22) speaks of ten Rajas ruling the tracts south of the Brahmaputra, in Kamrup District—those of "Baraduyar, Bholagram, Mairapoor, Lukiduyar, Pantamduyar, Bongramduyar, Vagaduyar, Beltola, Dumuriya and Raniduyar." Three other chiefs are also named, *e.g.*, "Myungh, Koleetah, Bogruteah, Ogooreah or Goorookeah Rajas"—the first two being petty village chiefs south of Gauhati, while the third was the ruler of an island between the Brahmaputra and the Kalang river. Rev. Robinson (Descriptive Account of Assam, p. 283) informs us that the "Duwars" were assigned to the hill-chieftains, who were responsible to the Ahom king for the peace of those frontier tracts. The "Deshes" were apparently held on the same terms as the "Duwars," by tributary chiefs, styled as Rajas. Robinson mentions four "Deshes"—"Desh Dumuria, Desh Panbarri, Desh Beltalla and Desh Rani," and nine "Duwars"—"Duwars Lukhi, Boko, Bungong, Bogie, Charigong, Pantan, Bara, Bholagong and Mourapur." The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* mentions 10 frontier Rajas—*e.g.*, "Hangrabaria Raja, Jay Raja, Gukar Raja, Mankhing or Manhing, Haldhibaria Raja, Barnagaria Raja, Kantam Raja, Ruphing, Bamun Raja, Borduaria Raja."

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of the lower region was termed Dimarua Raja ("Raja Damriah"). He was a son-in-law of Parikshit Narayan, and fought on his behalf, against the Mughals, in the Kamrup campaign. About the latter part of 1616, he joined his fellow chiefs in an attack on the Imperial post of Pandu. The next important hill-chief was Mamu Govinda of Beltala, an uncle of Parikshit. Another noted chieftain was Rani Raja. A good many other hill-chiefs of the lower region also flourished. The hilly tract termed Rangdan, now covered by the Mechpara and Habraghat *mauzas*, was the seat of Kaltakari and his son Tahana. Next to it, was the domain of Parsuram, who gave great trouble to the Mughals both before and after his submission to them. Further east, in Kamrup proper, lived Akra Raja and his brother Rababar *alias* Chatsa Raja. Their territories appear to have been near the modern Boko Duar. Another hill-chief was Kanol Raja, also termed Haldia Duar Raja (after the name of his stronghold Haldia Duar). Adjacent to his domain, was the territory of Bar Duar Raja ("Hatoa Rajah Barduar"), the greatest of the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol*. The smaller chieftains of the lower hills, mentioned by Mirza Nathan, are Bamun Raja, Hangrabaria Raja, Sanjai Raja, Hasta Raja and Koka Raja.

Of the chiefs of the upper-hill region, only three are worth mentioning—Umed Raja, Raja of Khamranga, and Raja Nilirangili, the last one being the lord of the fourth series of hills.

The geographical distribution of the territories of the hill-chiefs is an important, though irksome task.* Of the lower hill-chiefs, the domain of Dimarua Raja occupied the region south of the confluence of the Kalang river with the Brahmaputra. To its west, lay Desh Panbari ; further east was Desh Beltala—

And territories identified.

* A good many of these chiefs are mentioned only by Mirza Nathan, and no contemporary or nearly contemporary map exists to locate their domains. A close study of Rennell's Map No. 5, and the Map of Zila Kamrup, attached to Rev. Robinson's Descriptive Account of Assam, enables me to give only a rough idea of the territorial distribution of the hill-chiefs.

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the seat of Mamu Govinda. To the west of Beltala lay *parganah* Ramsha, in which Pandu was included. Adjacent to Ramsha on the south-west, was the domain of Rani Raja. After his subjugation, Desh Rani was made the base of operation against the other hill-chieftains, and Ranihat was the most important fortified post of Mirza Nathan in *Dakhinkol.* Contiguous to Desh Rani on the south and south-west were the Duars. To the south of Desh Rani, was Duar Moirapoor, and west of it, Bholagong Duar. To the west of Bholagong, stretching right up to the southern frontier of Kamrup and adjoining the lofty Khasia Hills, lay Bar Duar. To the west of Bar Duar was Pantan Duar. Further west were Choigong, Bogee, Bongong, Boko, and Lookee Duars. To the north of these Duars, and west of Desh Rani, lay the *parganahs* Barontee, Choyannee and Chomooreea, the last of them abutting on the Nagarberra Hills to the west. The territories of the smaller chieftains *i. e.*, Koka Raja, Hasta Raja, Bamun Raja, Kanol Raja, Sanjai Raja and Hangrabaria Raja, baffle proper identification.

The realms of the upper hill-chiefs appear to have been in the extreme south, high up in the region adjacent to the Garo and the Khasia Hills. Khamranga Raja is mentioned by Mirza Nathan as the most powerful of the lot. The domain of Umed Raja lay near the realm of Akra Raja, while that of Raja Nilirangili was probably further west, in the modern Habraghat region.

The Mughal stronghold in *Dakhinkol* was at Pandu. It occupied an important strategic position on the bank of the Brahmaputra, and was the seat of the local fleet. There was a *thanah,* with a fort adequately garrisoned, under Mir Abdur Razzak Shirazi. The territory of Rani Raja lay immediately to the south-west of Pandu. It had not yet felt the weight of Mughal arms, and was for the moment without its king. So the *thanahdar* at Pandu thought it opportune to make a plundering raid, in order to terrify the subjects of this as well as the neighbouring hill-territories into

First Mughal enterprise in *Dakhinkol*—attack on Rani Raja, failed in the beginning.

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submission. But he had to return baffled. He was himself wounded, while a large number of his men were killed or captured.*

To retrieve this disaster, Mirza Nathan left Hajo for Pandu, with a number of war-boats. Thence he moved to Garal,† with a view to attacking Rani Raja and the neighbouring hill-chiefs. Apprised of the design of the friends of the Raja to make a diversion in his favour, by attacking at night the Imperial fort and the fleet at Pandu, during Mirza Nathan's absence therefrom, the astute Mirza left the greater part of his troops at Garal fort, and, with a few followers, hastened back to Pandu to meet the situtation. He made necessary repairs in Pandu fort, and strengthened the fortification of the neighbouring outposts. The projected attack soon came on. The hill-chiefs, with 22000 *paiks*, fell upon Pandu in three divisions from three different directions—the first along the Kamrup Duar route, the second, under Koka Raja, by the Kamakhya Duar route, while the third, under Dimarua Raja, by way of the Kamakhya Hill. The hillmen were numerically great, and the small band of Imperialists, under Mirza Nathan's headship, fought against them with the courage of despair. Three sallies into the Imperial fort were repulsed. The death of Koka Raja and the wound sustained by Dimarua Raja created confusion in the ranks of the hill-chiefs, who were soon put to flight. ‡

Its ultimate success under Mirza Nathan.

After repulsing the attack on Pandu fort, Mirza Nathan hastened to Garal, and thence resumed his former project of subduing Desh Rani. The fort of Ranihat, § the impregnable stronghold of Rani Raja, was the target of his attack. Perched high on a hill-top, crowded with dense jungle and surrounded

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 195a-b.

† Garal or Garoldee is 4 miles south-west of Pandu, and about 3 or 4 miles north of Desh Rani.

‡ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 196a-197a.

§ "Ranee Gawn," about 4 miles south-west of "Rani Raja's house and village", situated in a hilly region studded with forests, is obviously meant.

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by hills on three sides, it bade defiance to the Mughal cavalry and the elephants alike. To add to the troubles, the rainy season being at its height, the roads had become muddy, and so impassable for men and beasts, while the flood waters were not yet sufficiently high for the fleet to ply through. Mirza Nathan sent back some of his men with the elephants and the horses to Pandu, and then resorted to a simple but ingenious device to obviate his difficulties. With the help of the naval officers, he cut open sluices from the Brahmaputra and allowed the water to overflow the neighbouring places, facilitating thereby an easy passage for the Imperial fleet, which soon reached the vicinity of Ranihat.* A naval attack was then made, but it proved futile. The Imperialists then got down and marched along, while the fleet was taken to the foot of the hill-fort. A vantage point on a neighbouring hillock, commanding an easy ascent to the enemy stronghold, was soon discovered. It was guarded by a son of Raja Dimarua. The Imperialists made a bold attempt to capture the place, and achieved success after a hard struggle. This created great panic in the ranks of the enemy, and the hill-fort of Ranihat was soon evacuated. †

Capture of Ranihat fort, the stronghold of Rani Raja (*c.* September-October, 1616).

Master of the fort of Ranihat, the Mughals set fire to the house of Rani Raja as well as to one of his strategic posts, Banah ‡ by name. They next carried out a series of plundering raids, killing or capturing his subjects and seizing their belongings. Returning to Pandu, the Imperialists transferred their pillaging activities to the domains of the other hill-chiefs, so as to compel them to submit. §

A few months after, important governmental changes took place in Bengal, which greatly affected the history of

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* p. 197a.

† *Ibid* p. 197b.

‡ Robinson's Map shows "Bahonara", about half a mile north of "Rance Gawn", on the bank of the Jugonia river. This is probably the place.

§ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 197b.

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Kamrup. They involved a sudden break in the continuity of administrative policy, and caused a temporary dislocation of work there. This paved the way for internal dissensions and, at the same time, encouraged interference from outside. Early in April 1617, Ibrahim Khan Fathjang, governor of Orissa, was posetd to Bengal, in supersession of Qasim Khan, and Qulij Khan was selected as the governor of Kamrup.* Though appointed in April, the new viceroy did not reach Jahangirnagar, to take formal charge of his duties, till the month of November.

Changes in Bengal government and in Kamrup.

During this period of interregnum, events of far-reaching consequence took place in Kamrup. The first is the withdrawal of the favourite officers of the ex-viceroy, the most noteworthy of them being Abdul Baki. Anxious to further the cause of his master, Abdul Baki attempted to take away with him, all the elephants, artillery and the fleet as well as the vassal zamindars, leaving Kamrup an easy prey to internal revolt and external attack. Thanks to Mirza Nathan's vigilance and cunning, his designs were foiled.†

Give rise to internal dissensions.

Abdul Baki's departure from Kamrup, left Mirza Nathan in virtual control of affairs there. The most formidable task with which Nathan was now faced, is the rebellion of Shaikh Ibrahim *krori*. He had misappropriated seven *lakhs* of rupees, being the Imperial revenue for the last three years. Faced with severe punishment for his misdemeanour, the Shaikh rebelled, and then, in order to strengthen his position, entered into a nefarious intrigue with the Ahom king. The latter was to help the former in securing the sovereignty of Kamrup for himself, and the Shaikh in return, was to join the king in his warfare with the Mughals. Though the astute

Rebellion of Shaikh Ibrahim *krori* of Kamrup and his intrigue with the Ahom king.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 198a.

† Great details of this trouble occur in pp. 198a-203a of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*.

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Ahom monarch readily fell in with the Shaikh's proposal, he desired the latter to begin hostilities forthwith, as an earnest of his good faith and serious intention. If this were done, Shaikh Ibrahim was promised help in men, money and war-materials, besides a feudatory rulership and an Ahom princess.*

Pursuant to these treacherous negotiations, Shaikh Ibrahim secretly exhorted Sonatan Koch to attack the *thanah* of Dhamdhama and capture the entire garrison there. The vigilant *thanahdar* Mirza Saleh Arghun repulsed a night-attack, and then solicited help from Hajo. The Shaikh next instigated some rebels to intercept, on the bank of the Barlia river, the timely arrival of reinforcement, under Mir Abdur Razzak Shirazi, but Mirza Nathan's skill frustrated the attempt. Apprehensive of further troubles, Mirza Yusuf Barlas was now sent from Hajo to take charge of the fort and the Imperial fleet at Pandu. Shaikh Ibrahim soon appeared in his true colours, and all his intrigues and secret hostilities were exposed and communicated to the authorities by Mirza Nathan.†

Meantime the new Bengal *subahdar* reached Jahangirnagar. The troublesome affairs of Kamrup now engaged his serious attention. Instead of obeying the orders of the Royal Court, with regard to the posting of Qulij Khan to Kamrup, Ibrahim Khan Fathjang made his own choice and ordered Chisti Khan to proceed to Hajo as the governor, with Shaikh Kamal as his deputy.‡ A good number of officers, with artillery and war-boats, were also sent there for putting down the rebel officer.

Orders soon arrived from the Royal Court to capture the miscreant alive. Three ingenious attempts were made by Mirza Nathan to get hold of Shaikh Ibrahim's person, but they all failed. The two parties now got ready for an open encounter. Shaikh Ibrahim made two forts on the bank of the Barlia river, and determined to dispute the passage of the

Their failure.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 208b.

† *Ibid*, p. 210a.

‡ *Ibid.*

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Imperialists across it. The revolt having now assumed a serious character, Mirza Nathan requisitioned the help of the *thanahdar* of Pandu. After a hard struggle, the Imperialists crossed the river Barlia and captured the two forts of the Shaikh, who was at last wounded and killed. An immense booty, including 50000 rupees, was secured.* The defeat and death of the Shaikh spoilt the grand plan of the Assam king to subvert Mughal domination in Kamrup.

Notwithstanding its miserable failure, the prolonged rebellion of the Shaikh hit the Mughals hard in one way. Coming in the wake of important governmental changes, it seriously weakened Imperial authority in Kamrup. Taking advantage of this situation, Bali Narayan, ever on the look-out to attack the Mughals, again appeared on the scene. Accompanied by the hill-chieftains of *Dakhinkol*, he laid siege to the *thanah* of Pandu. The small garrison there was about to be overpowered, when some reinforcement arrived from Hajo. But as the officers of the capital were busy putting down Shaikh Ibrahim's rebellion, adequate help could not be sent therefrom. So the siege of Pandu dragged on for a long time. On one occasion, a vigorous charge was made, and the fall of the fort appeared certain. But the great bravery of the Bengal zamindars who had come to the succour of Mirza Yusuf Barlas, the *thanahdar*, turned the balance in favour of the Mughals, and Bali Narayan, with the hill-chiefs, was at last compelled to give up the siege and beat a hasty retreat.†

Raja Bali Narayan attacked Pandu, but at first failed to capture it.

Nothing daunted, the energetic Koch chief Bali Narayan soon availed himself of another opportunity for attacking the Mughals. The rebellion of Shaikh Ibrahim having now assumed the aspect of a bitter internecine feud, the services of the Mughal garrison at Pandu had to be utilised in putting an end to it. On

His ultimate success.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 212a-13a, 214b-220a.

† *Ibid*, p. 221a.

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the withdrawal of the Imperialist troops from Pandu, Bali Narayan immediately occupied it without a struggle.*

The capture of Pandu was a brilliant *coup de maître* for Bali Narayan. Anxious to retain the prize, he appealed to the Ahom king for help. The latter, baffled in his desire for overthrowing Mughal power in Kamrup with the help of the rebel Shaikh, readily seized this new opportunity for fulfilling it. He sent his chief officers—the Burha Gohain, the Bar Gohain, the Bar Patra Gohain, with the Hati Barua and others, including a Rajkhoa, and also a large number of *paiks*, elephants and war-boats, to Kajali, which stood at the confluence of the Kalang with the Brahmaputra. Thence the Ahom host advanced to Bardadhigaon,† a few miles south-east of Hajo, and stationed there.‡ Pandu and Agiathuti were now strongly garrisoned by it.

And his reinforcement by the Ahom king.

The loss of Pandu was a severe blow to the Mughals, for, it jeopardised the maintenance of their authority over the whole of *Dakhinkol* region. At the top of this, came the news of the approach of the mighty army of the Assâm king, to reinforce Bali Narayan. This struck great terror into the minds of the local officers. The situation was really alarming. The enemy was knocking at the gates of Hajo, the capital, yet they were without adequate resources to face it. Further, Qulij Khan, the governor-designate of Kamrup, had indeed reached Barnagar, but had not yet come over to Hajo, to take charge of his office.

Mirza Nathan, who was the most energetic of the officers at the headquarters, now took upon himself the task of organising defence, with the small number of men at his disposal. As directed by him, Mirza Yusuf Barlas with his party stationed himself in

Mughal preparations to meet the impending Ahom attack.

* The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* tacitly supports the account of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, regarding the occupation of Pandu by Bali Narayan and later on by the Ahoms.

† The Kamrup Village Directory, p. 11 locates Bardadhigaon in Hajo *thanah*.

‡ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 221a.

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one of the islands of the Brahmaputra, between Hajo and Pandu. But the numerical strength and the bold movements of the Assamese near by, thoroughly unnerved him, and he soon appealed for help. Raja Satrajit and one of Mirza Nathan's own officers now joined Mirza Yusuf Barlas. Afterwards Mirza Nathan himself reached there from Hajo, for reconnoitring purpose. Under his instructions, two stockades were made, one on each bank of the Brahmaputra, where its breadth was comparatively small, and it was decided to hold them against the enemy. In case it was deemed unsafe to remain at Hajo, the Imperialists might as well retire to their new insular strongholds.

No sooner had Mirza Nathan left the island back for Hajo, than the Imperialists, headed by Raja Satrajit, also vacated it and followed him thither. * They were panic-stricken, and could not think of facing the powerful enemy in that lonely island, with the limited resources at their disposal. In dire distress, Mirza Nathan set about strengthening the fortifications of Hajo, and sent urgent messages to Qulij Khan and Shaikh Kamal to hasten there. Qulij Khan, who had sent ahead from Gilahni his chief officer Dost Beg with his party, now himself reached Hajo. But owing to the duplication of the chief command, by the Bengal viceroy's appointment of Chisti Khan, Qulij Khan would not earnestly take up his work, though repeatedly requested by Mirza Nathan to do so. †

Shortly after Qulij Khan's arrival, Shaikh Kamal too, with his own men, reached Hajo. But, owing to a long standing personal enmity between him and Mirza Nathan, the Shaikh did

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 221b.

The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* vaguely refers to the occupation of the island by the Mughals and their subsequent retreat to Hajo, as follows :—"The Musalmans retreated and halted in a Chapari. Our armies fired guns to the enemy from both sides of the Chapari and the Musalmans retreated to Hajo." As Mirza Nathan clearly tells us, there was no fighting in the island, and the small Imperial contingent hastily withdrew to Hajo and dared not fight there.

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 222b.

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not join the latter in Hajo fort, and encamped outside the citadel, near the temple of Hayagriva Madhaba, and made a stockade there. Another small fortification, 1000 yds. in length, was also got ready at Talia, about 5 miles north-east of Hajo. * This defection of Shaikh Kamal greatly weakened the Mughal cause.

The news of the arrival of reinforcement at Hajo, under Qulij Khan and Shaikh Kamal, was soon communicated by the Ahom officers at Bardadhigaon, to their master at Samdhara. To keep the Mughals off their guard, they also circulated the news of their withdrawal from Kamrup. But the trick was too palpable to be effective. The Ahom king then ordered his officers to launch a vigorous attack upon the fortified capital, before the Imperialists could meet them thoroughly prepared. The Ahom entrenchments at Pandu and Agiathuti were now strngthened, and a new outpost was set up at Chenchamukh, about 7 or 8 miles north-west of Gauhati. † As was customary with them, the Ahoms consulted the omens, which were found unfavourable. Still they decided on fighting. ‡

Ahom martial preparations.

A gigantic attack on Hajo, by land and water, was planned. The Burha Gohain in chief command (with the Barpatra Gohain, Mani Kumar and others), at the head of the first division of troops, numbering one *lakh*, was to make a night-attack on Mirza Nathan and Qulij Khan, entrenched in Hajo fort. He was to move thither, along the hilly

A grand attack was made on Hajo, by land and water, by the Ahom army.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 223a.

† *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam.

‡ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 223b.

The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* gives a different version of the origin of the encounter. The omens were found favourable, but hostilities were begun by the Ahom generals ("the Neogs"), on their own initiative, at an evil moment, contrary to the orders of the king and in spite of the warnings sounded by the other officers, especially the Gohains.

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and jungly bank of the Brahmaputra, leaving the hillock named after the Muslim saint Ghiyasu-d din Aulia to his right, and the Madhaba temple to the left. The main Ahom fleet was ordered to fight in co-operation with him. The Bar Gohain, Lai Gohain and others were to advance along the other bank of the river (Brahmaputra) and ascend Hajo Hill to help the Burha Gohain, while Bali Narayan (Dharma Narayan or Dharma Raja of the Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis*), aided by his able lieutenant Shumarooed Kayeth, and the Hati Barua and the Rajkhoa, was to fall upon Shaikh Kamal, with the second army division, consisting of two *lakhs* of men, and 180 elephants. A fleet of 4000 war-boats, under another Rajkhoa and a "Kharkhoka," was deputed to overpower the Imperial transports in the Brahmaputra (so that a co-operation of the army with the fleet would be frustrated). Another section of the Ahom navy was stationed near the south bank, in order to thwart any attempt at escape to *Dakhinkol* ; and the hill-chiefs, with the deserters from the Imperial side, were asked to aid it, if necessary. Besides this, 1000 war-boats were sent down to guard a strategic point in the river (probably its confluence with the Manas) so as to block the path of communication and food supply from Bengal. With their way of escape and the means of sustenance thus effectively blockaded on all possible sides, the Mughals at Hajo were brought to bay like games in a hunt, and their fate appeared to be sealed. *

The Burha Gohain—the Ahom commander-in-chief, began the struggle under brilliant auspices. On a dark wintry night

* The *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 223b, gives the most detailed and methodical account of the disposition of the Ahom forces, and I have mainly followed it. The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* agrees in general with the *Baharistan*, but differs in detail. It makes the Neog Phukan, the commander-in-chief of the Ahom forces, though the *Baharistan* clearly assigns that dignity to the Burha Gohain. I have tried to assimilate as far as possible the evidence of the Ahom *Buranji*. Of the Assamese *Buranjis*, the *Purani Asama Buranji* tells us vaguely that the Dharma Raja (Bali Narayan) was stationed at the south-eastern corner (of Hajo), while the east and the north were held by the three Gohains.

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(Nov-December, 1617), * he stormed the hillock of Sultan Ghiyasu-d din Aulia, and killed all the votaries of that sacred place except one, who somehow escaped to inform Qulij Khan, the Mughal commander, of this sudden attack. The latter, with Dost Beg and 20000 troops, hastened to meet the enemy. A severe encounter took place on the hill-top, to the north of Ghiyasu-d din Aulia's tomb and near the temple of Madhaba. The Ahom host pounced upon the small Mughal contingent like blood-thirsty tigers and soon reduced it to a miserable plight. It then passed beyond the temple, and pinned the shattered remnants of the Mughals to the foot of the hill. †

Its initial success.

As arranged before, the main Ahom fleet, working in co-operation with the army of the Burha Gohain, first over-powered the war-vessels of the Bengal zamindars, and then reached the foot of the hill on which the Ahom general was fighting. There it encountered the Imperial fleet, and got the better of it in no time. More than half of the war-boats were driven ashore. ‡

Thus it appeared as if the Ahoms would gain a complete triumph. But the tide of fortune soon rolled back, and the second division of the Ahom army suffered a severe set-back. On the morning following the Burha Gohain's attack on the Hajo fort, Bali Narayan, Shumarooed Kayeth and the Hati Barua, with innumerable *paiks* and elephants, fell upon Shaikh Kamal, as he was about to move to Qulij Khan's succour. The Shaikh was reduced to great straits, but the timely arrival of Mirza Nathan with his contingent, turned the course of the battle. A deadly struggle ensued "resembling the day of Resurrection". §

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* The leading authorities do not directly mention the time of the warfare. But internal evidence in the *Baharistan*, the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam, leads me to suggest that it was in early winter (November-December) of 1617.

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 224a

‡ *Ibid*, p. 224b.

§ Mirza Nathan gives a graphic description of the encounter.

At last the Ahom army was compelled to retreat, leaving Shaikh Kamal and Mirza Nathan free to turn to the help of Qulij Khan. *

This success raised the drooping spirit of the Mughals, and they now set their face to composing the mutual differences and securing unity of action. Shaikh Kamal with his troops was persuaded to join the garrison in Hajo fort, while Mirza Nathan and others undertook to safeguard his stockade and his contingent of war-boats. The internal dissensions composed, Mirza Nathan and the party next turned to the strengthening of their main stronghold, whose safety was jeopardised by the Ahoms. For reconnoitring purpose, Mirza Nathan once got to the residence of Qulij Khan, which was on a hillock, commanding a good view of the neighbouring region. As luck would have it, he found that the main Ahom fleet was then leisurely passing by the foot of that hillock, in the vain belief that as the Imperialist fleet had already been worsted, it was immune from further attack. † This false sense of security brought about its ruin, and spoilt the fruits of Ahom victory.

All on a sudden, the plucky Mirza ordered the discharge of the big cannon which were mounted on Qulij Khan's house. This came like a bolt from the blue. A terrible panic seized the Ahom oarsmen, some of whom jumped into the water, while others ran ashore, leaving their charge behind. ‡ It was hardly a battle, but a mere rout. The Mughals at once took possession of the disabled fleet, and secured immense booty.

And ultimate failure.

The sudden and unexpected defeat and capture of the Ahom fleet finally decided the main issue. The Burha Gohain, who had been fighting on Hajo hill, and had achieved initial success, got greatly disheartened at this untoward circumstance, and a great confusion and panic arose in his ranks. § The

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 225a-b.

† *Ibid*, p. 226a.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 226b.

§ *Ibid*.

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Mughals were not slow to take advantage of this position, and charged the Ahoms vigorously by the rear. In the mêlée that ensued, the Burha Gohain was killed unrecognised. * About 4000 of his men fell fighting, more than 2000 were wounded, while the rest beat an ignominious retreat to Kajali, and thence to the Ahom king at Samdhara, leaving a rich booty, including 80 elephants, a large number of guns and 3800 war-boats, in the hands of the victors. 9 wooden stockades were also captured. †

Thus ended in failure the first decisive attempt made by Bali Narayan (strengthened by the enormous resources of the Ahom king) to overthrow Mughal power in Kamrup. It was indeed a critical point in the history of the province. Pandu had been captured, and if it were followed by the fall of Hajo, the region east of the Manas would have been totally lost. But the crisis was now over, and the Mughals heaved a sigh of relief.

The great success achieved in the winter of 1617, secured for the Mughals a respite (though short) from the hostilities of Bali

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* The *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* (p. 227a), the *Purani Asama Buranji* (p. 90) and Dr. Wade's book, tell us that the Burha Gohain fell in battle. But according to the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*, he was wounded in the fray and was captured by the Mughals, while the Bar Gohain, the Barpatra Gohain, and the Hati Barua all fled, and were severely punished by the Ahom king.

† Of the various phases of this gigantic struggle, Mirza Nathan, who took a prominent part in it, gives a vivid picture. The accounts of the *Padishahnamah* (Vol. II. p. 70) as well as of the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and of the *Purani Asama Buranji* (p. 89-90), are shorter and colourless in character. Of course, they are unanimous in ascribing the ultimate defeat, with great loss, to the Ahoms. Dr. Wade apparently follows the Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis*, and has nothing new to say on this topic.

We may note in passing that a totally perverted version of this warfare finds a place in the *Darrang Raj Bansabali* (pp. 148-50). The story, narrated therein, of the brilliant exploits of Bali Narayan (aided by the Assam king) in driving the Musalmans out of Kamrup, followed by the extension of the Ahom domain as far as the Karatoya river on the west, is a pure myth, and does not stand a moment's scrutiny, as it is in total contradiction to the unanim evidence of the Persian Chronicles and the *Buranjis*.

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Narayan. But fresh troubles were brewing in the south-western frontier, which required prompt action. The military skill and administrative ability already displayed by Mirza Nathan, led the Bengal viceroy, at this stage (*c.* March 1618), to depute him formally to weed out the rebel element in *Dakhinkol* and consolidate Imperial authority there. Mirza Nathan, who had gone to Hajo after the last victory, was soon equipped with 700 cavalry, 1000 matchlockmen and 50 war- boats, and sent to his new post. *

Mirza Nathan deputed to pacify *Dakhinkol* (*c.* March, 1618).

The first thing which claimed the attention of Mirza Nathan and his colleagues, was the sudden seizure of Kari Bary, the strategic frontier on the south-west, by Madhusudan, † a nephew of Raja Lakshmi Narayan. The Bengal viceroy sent an army headed by the vassal zamindars of Bengal (Musa Khan and others) to put him down. Madhusudan was soon compelled to submit, and was brought down to Jahangirnagar, where he took the oath of allegiance to the Emperor. ‡

Submission of Madhusudan, a nephew of Raja Lakshmi Narayan, to the Mughals.

Gait (History of Assam, pp. 68, 109—10) has, on his part, given a very brief and somewhat confused account of this episode. He makes the Ahom king Pratap Singh, the hero of the tragic drama, and portrays Bali Narayan as playing only a subordinate part in it. But the *Baharistan*, the *Purani Asama Buranji* and also Dr. Wade's book seem to suggest just the opposite. Bali Naryan was really in the leading role, and was more properly the hero. It was he, who first began the warfare by a daring attack on Pandu, and not the Ahom king Pratap Singh, as Mr. Gait (p. 109) would have us believe. Of course, when the Ahom ruler was once drawn into the conflict, he fought with all his might, but he did not take the initiative, and came in only as an auxiliary to his ambitious and able feudatory chief (Bali Narayan). Moreover, the learned author of the History of Assam has fallen into an error in naming Abdu-s salam as the Mughal commander. The contemporary testimony of Mirza Nathan leaves no doubt that Qulij Khan and Shaikh Kamal were the leading Mughal officers at that time.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 229a.

† He appears to have been a son of "Brishaketu", one of the eighteen sons of Raghu Deb.

‡ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, 229b.

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On the eve of the rains (*c.* April-May 1618), Mirza Nathan came down from Jahangirnagar to attend to his new duties. A detachment from the local fleet stationed at Chandankotah *thanah*, now came to his aid. Urged on by the Bengal *subahdar* to move to *Dakhinkol* without delay, Mirza Nathan advanced up the Brahmaptura to Jasipur, * which "intervened between it and Mechpara *parganah*". †

Mirza Nathan's attempt to subdue Parsuram—a rebel chief of *Dakhinkol*.

One of the most stubborn enemies of the Mughal peace in the hilly and jungly region to the south of the Brahmaputra, lying to the west of the Nagarberra Hills, was Parsuram. His stronghold was Solmari *parganah*, ‡ (covered probably by the whole of the modern Mechpara and the western part of the Habraghat *parganah* Dt. Goalpara). By his plundering raids along the bank of the Brahmaputra, Parsuram had effectively obstructed the regular supply of provisions to the Imperialist headquarters, and had reduced the officers there to a sad plight. §

Though defeated more than once and driven from his stronghold, Parsuram long eluded capture.

With his own troops, reinforced by 500 matchlockmen and 300 cavalry, Mirza Nathan decided to storm the seat of Parsuram, and divided his men in two divisions, to move by two different routes. As the *parganah* of Mechpara, with its surrounding region, was included in the *jagir* of Qulij Khan, his local agent came to co-operate with the Mirza in putting down the rebel chieftain. Being informed of the designs of Parsuram to dispute the advance of the Imperialists, near the defile of "Kathabari" ‖ with 10000 *paiks*, Mirza Nathan changed the route, and moved with the war-boats towards Chandankotah. When Parsuram heard about it, he

* Gasipur, is in Mechpara *mauza*, *thanah* Lakshipur, District Goalpara.

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 229b.

‡ The *Padishahnamah* (Vol. 11. p. 77) says, "*Parganah* Solmari belongs to *Dakhinkol*."

§ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 230a.

‖ Katasbari, in Mechpara *mauza*, Dt. Goalpara, is obviously meant.

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marched ahead of the Mirza, along the hilly bank of the Brahmaputra, and fortifying a convenient spot on the bank of a stream, forced him to an engagement there. Mirza's men fought in three divisions, one of which, marching under cover of a neighbouring hillock, took the enemy fort by the unprotected rear. This sudden move unnerved Parsuram, and he fled.* Another attempt made by him to prevent the Mughals from marching upon Solmari proved equally futile. † Disheartened at the repeated reverses, Parsuram gave up his stronghold without further fighting, and sought shelter with his bag and baggage in the neighbouring Makri hill. Solmari and Kantabari—the most important of Parsuram's posts, were soon occupied by the Mughals. ‡ A *thanah* was established at Solmari. Plundering parties were then sent into the hilly regions around, and regular information about the movements of the enemy was gathered through the spies.

The next attempt of the Mughals was to kill Parsuram, or, if possible, capture him alive. In order to realise it, Mirza Nathan proceeded to attack the domains of Kaltakari and his son Tahana, who were the most turbulent of the hill-chiefs of the neighbouring region, and had given shelter to Parsuram. Reinforced by a detachment of troops sent from Hajo, under Dost Beg and Bal Bahadur Das, the Mirza reached Baljanah, § "a place in the Rangdan region", ‖ situated on the river Jingiram, and included in the *jagir* of Qulij Khan. Thence the Mughals marched to Taspur, fortified it, and halted there. Finding the enemy knocking at the gate, the hill-chiefs showed eagerness to come to terms and acknowledge the Imperial supremacy. ¶ But while negotiations were going

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 230a-b.

† *Ibid*, p. 231a.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ Balijana is in Mechpara *mauza*, Dt. Goalpara.

‖ The hilly and jungly tract to the north of the Rangjuli mountains, occupying the south-eastern portion of the modern Goalpara District, is here referred to.

¶ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 232b.

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on, some of the non-combatants in the Mughal camp, got themselves involved in a fray with the hillmen and were put to rout.

Mirza Nathan hastened to their succour and thoroughly overpowered the hillmen, and then set the whole region of Rangdan ablaze. He then went back to Taspur. * To ensure the safety of his line of communication and food supply, he next established a *thanah* at Baljanah, † and placed it in charge of his *bakshi*, Badri Das, and then set out in quest of Parsuram again. Meantime the latter had come out for warfare, and from his shelter behind the hills, marshes and the jungles around, began to harass the Imperialists at Baljanah, by pillage and plunder and obstruction of the path of communication. In company of Dost Beg, Mirza Nathan at once hastened to chastise Parsuram, who for a time prevailed over him by guerilla warfare. At last he was compelled to meet in an open encounter, and was thoroughly defeated by the Mirza. Parsuram then repaired again to his place of refuge in the Makri hill. To gain a breathing time, Mirza Nathan now went back to Baljanah. ‡

But the energetic Mirza knew no rest. After a short interval, he again resumed his search for Parsuram, leaving Baljanah in charge of his Hindu officer, Bal Bahadur Das. He passed beyond the Makri hill, and reached the brink of a pool, where he came upon Parsuram unawares. A scuffle ensued, in which Parsuram again suffered a defeat, with great loss, but still he and his son eluded capture. §

Meanwhile important changes had occurred in the Kamrup government. The Bengal viceroy's nominee, Chisti Khan,

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* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 233a.

† Martin (Eastern India, Vol. III. p. 479) says :—"Near Haworaghat, Dolgoma, Balijana, Jira and perhaps a few other places, are the remains of small mud forts, that were erected by the Muhammadans."

‡ Great details of the warfare occur in pp. 233b-34b of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*.

§ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 236a-b.

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having not arrived, Shaikh Kamal went to Jahangirnagar and persuaded the viceroy to appoint him in his stead. Accompanied by many of the leading *amirs* of the capital and almost all the loyal vassal zamindars, including Raja Lakshmi Narayan, Shaikh Kamal left for Hajo to join his new office. *

Governmental changes in Kamrup.

Anxious to enlist the services of such an experienced, faithful, and valiant officer as Mirza Nathan, the Shaikh, on his way to Hajo, stopped at Baghuan, in Mechpara *parganah*, and sent for the Mirza who was then stationed at Baljanah. But as there was no love lost between the two, the Mirza evaded meeting the Shaikh, by leaving his station in search of Parsuram. Moreover, desirous of compelling Shaikh Kamal to leave him alone, Mirza Nathan instructed the *thanahdar* of Baljanah not to allow the Shaikh to pass through it. Finding the Mirza inexorable in his attitude, Shaikh Kamal crossed the Brahmaputra over to *Uttarkol*, and went to Hajo, allowing thereby Mirza Nathan a free hand in *Dakhinkol* region. †

Freed from vexatious interference, Mirza Nathan then resumed his work with renewed vigour. Though the capture of Solmari, followed by the dogged pursuit of the Imperialists, had reduced Parsuram to a miserable plight, yet he himself could not be got hold of. Mirza Nathan then decided to entrust the local *thanahdars* of Baljanah and Solmari with the task of finishing with Parsuram, while he himself was to proceed to attack the two strongholds of Amjanga and Rangjuli of a more formidable enemy, Shumarooed Kayeth. ‡ The Mirza accordingly returned to Solmari, put adequate garrison there as well as in Baljanah, and himself then marched to Manikpur, § on his way to Amjanga.

Mughal outposts at Baljanah and Solmari.

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* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 235a-b.

† *Ibid*, p. 236a.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 236b.

§ Manikpur is in Habraghat *mauza*, *thanah* Rangjuli, District Goalpara.

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Shumarooed Kayeth was the most formidable enemy of the Mughals, next to Raja Bali Narayan. Mirza Nathan dubs him as "the head (really the brain) of the rebel element in Koch region and the chief officer of Raja Baldeo". * From the year 1618 till his capture, he gave immense trouble to the Imperialists, from his impregnable strongholds of Amjanga and Rangjuli, and, when these were captured, from the territories of the hill-chiefs where he got ready shelter. Associated with him in his rebellious career, were Mamu Govinda, the uncle of Parikshit and Bali Narayan, and Parsuram, the lord of Solmari, and the trio made the position of the Mughals too hot in the region south of the Brahmaputra. As the chief lieutenant of Raja Bali Narayan, Shumarooed counted upon the help of the Ahom king as well. The seat of his power appears to have been contiguously to the east of Parsuram's sphere of influence, and is now included in the Habraghat *parganah*.

Shumarooed Kayeth, the second great enemy of the Mughals, had Amjanga and Rangjuli as his strongholds.

Of the two strongholds of Shumarooed, that of Amjanga, which was in charge of his men and not guarded by him personally, was the first object of Mirza Nathan's attack. After he had reached very near it, he was informed by the spies that Parsuram and Mamu Govinda were just then busy getting into Amjanga fort, with their bag and baggage. The Mirza at once fell upon the enemy in two divisions. Parsuram made good his escape, and though Mamu Govinda, with his son, was captured, he too later on gave the Mirza the slip, but his son was killed. † The next attempt was upon the fort of Amjanga itself. The garrison offered a vigorous resistance, and killed a good number of the Imperialists. The Mirza then attacked the fort from the rear, and succeeded in reaching the hill on which it stood. This created a panic,

Mirza Nathan attacked Amjanga and captured it.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* p. 251a.

† *Ibid*, p. 237a.

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and the enemy, apprehensive of the safety of their path of retreat to the adjoining fort of Rangjuli, vacated Amjanga without further resistance, and repaired thereto. *

Master of the fort of Amjanga, Mirza Nathan marched to the foot of the Karwan hills, recruited 4000 hillmen there, and next launched an attack upon the fort of Rangjuli. The conquest of Rangjuli proved to be a very difficult task. Perched on a high hill-top, thickly overgrown with forests, it occupied an impregnable position, and was inaccessible to the Mughal cavalry and the elephants alike. The fort-walls and the turrets were high and built so strongly of solid wood that they appeared to be hewn out of rock, as it were. Surrounding the fort on all sides, was a deep ditch, full of water. The wily Shumarooed was himself the commandant here. After a few futile attempts to take the fort by storm, Mirza Nathan laid siege to it. †

Attack on Rangjuli fort—a protracted affair.

A high fortification, with a deep ditch round it, was made by the Mughals, along with a small watch-post by its side. Attempts were then made to prevent ingress and egress from the enemy fort. In order to block the path of rations and to strike terror into the minds of the garrison within, regular plundering parties were sent to the neighbouring region. Though a great many places were burnt down, and a large number of men captured, it had no effect upon the real issue, and the position of the besiegers gradually became precarious. In the desultory fighting which went on, many of them were killed. To add to the discomfiture, 700 of the rest went over to the side of the enemy. A great despondency now came over, and a retreat was eagerly sought for. But Mirza Nathan remained unshaken, and urged on his men to continue the struggle. He now resorted to a trick. Heaps of grass were piled up, at an arrow's distance

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 237b.

† *Ibid*, p. 238a.

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from the enemy fort, till they rose above its level. Cannon were then mounted upon them and fired, but to no purpose. *

The next device was to make movable defensive barriers of dried grass, besmeared with mud (*saibah*), at short intervals from one another, and to advance under their shelter towards the fort. When three such barriers had been raised, the enemy destroyed them all, by means of long bamboo pieces, edged with blazing grass. Another experiment was then tried. In front of grass-barriers made afresh, was set up a big moving roller-like machine (*gardun*), under cover of which, elephants could move forward. But the enemy guns spoiled this trick as well. Raw pieces of wood were next substituted for dried grass in the construction of the protective barriers, so as to make them noncombustible, and the Imperialists then continued their endeavour to reach near the enemy stronghold under their cover. Though the fort-walls were at last reached, attempts to scale over them failed. †

The siege of Rangjuli thus dragged on. Instructed by the Bengal *subahdar*, Raja Satrajit now came to the help of Mirza Nathan and his party. ‡ Shumarooed, on his part, informed Raja Bali Narayan about this, and begged his help. The Raja procured 10,000 picked men from the hill-chieftains, and sent them over to the defence of the Rangjuli fort, under the command of a Rajkhoa.§ Apprised of the arrival of a strong reinforcement to the enemy, Mirza Nathan, too, recruited 1000 soldiers from Hajo.

While both the parties were thus preparing for a renewed trial of strength, events in another quarter decided the fate of the struggle, and speedily brought it to an end. The continued marauding expeditions of the Imperialists having rendered desolate the region around the Rangjuli fort, up to a distance

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 238b.

† *Ibid*, pp. 239a-40a. Minute details of the various devices employed are given here.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 240b.

§ *Ibid*, p. 242a.

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of 12 *kos*, a detachment under Khwaja Saadat Khan, was posted to "Bachadhari, a place in Baohanti region" (to the south-east of the modern Goalpara, on the left bank of the Brahmaputra), wherefrom similar pillaging activities were indulged in.* The headman of Bachadhari, Govinda by name, was now won over to the Mughal side, on promise of the safety of his own and his son-in-law's life. Warned by him of a projected attack on the newly made Imperial outpost by Raja Bali Narayan, with 4000 troops, Khwaja Saadat took time by the forelock, fell upon him unawares, and soon put him to flight. †

Conquest of Rangjuli effected after a siege of 42 days (*c.* March, 1619).

Grateful for his life, Govinda next agreed to aid the Mughals in their conquest of Rangjuli fort (by communicating to them its vulnerable points) as well as in their attempt to capture the arch-enemy, Bali Narayan. Under his instructions, three possible paths of food supply to the enemy fort were effectively blocked. Next, a very high place in the neighbourhood, which commanded a thorough view of the entire region, including the inmost corner of the enemy stronghold, was occupied. This last stroke had a decisive effect, and the enemy got so much alarmed about its own safety that it hastily evacuated the fort at night. ‡

Thus Rangjuli fell into the hands of the Mughals after a protracted siege of 42 days. (*c.* February-March 1619). Its capture proved to be a providential act. But for the intervention of Govinda, it would have probably never happened. The hornet's nest in *Dakhinkol* was for a time destroyed, and Shumarooed was driven to be a wandering exile. A long rest, after the strenuous exertions, was badly needed by the war-worn Mughals. But the indefatigable Mirza Nathan would not take it. After sending an adequate reinforcement to Bal Bahadur Das and his party, engaged in chastising Parsuram at Solmari, the Mirza himself set out in pursuit of Shumarooed, who had fled to the territory of the hill-chieftains to the east. §

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* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 243a.

† *Ibid*, p. 244b.

‡ *Ibid*, pp. 245a-46b. § *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 246b.

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The scene of interest once again changes. Henceforward the Mughals, under the able guidance of Mirza Nathan, carried on a systematic attempt to establish and extend their authority over the hilly and jungly regions of *Dakhinkol*, to the east of the Nagarberra Hills (now covered by the southern portion of the Kamrup District). This was the stronghold of a number of hill-chieftains, who had to be put down one by one.

In his quest of Shumarooed, Mirza Nathan passed over to the southern bank of the Brahmaputra, and reached Boko Duar. At this stage, a hill-chieftain, Chatsa Raja by name (brother of Akra Raja), who had already gone over to the Mughals, and was acting as their spy, informed Mirza Nathan that Shumarooed was busy fortifying a defile, commanding the shortest route to the neighbouring territories, with a view to obstructing his further progress.*

Mirza Nathan's futile pursuit of Shumarooed through the domain of the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol*.

Mirza Nathan hastened to the spot, charged the rebel vigorously and dislodged him from his half-finished fortification. But, undismayed by his defeat, Shumarooed then requisitioned a number of fierce elephants from his patron, Raja Bali Narayan, who was staying near by, and led a counter-attack against the Mirza, but met with no better success, and fled at last. Pursuing him hard, a Mughal detachment came by, per chance, Bali Narayan's fortified station on the bank of a stream. The Raja was taken aback at this unexpected turn of events, and hastily left his asylum (with all the belongings) for the domain of the neighbouring hill-chiefs.†

The hill-Rajas had next to be dealt with. Fortunately for the Mughals, one of them, named Akra Raja, now voluntarily surrendered and readily acknowledged their supremacy. Through his help, a project to attack the domain of Umed Raja, a chief of the upper-hills, was made, but it did

Pursuit of Raja Bali Narayan through the realms of Raja Bar Duar.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 247a.

† *Ibid*, p. 248a.

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not materialise.* Under the guidance of Govinda, the headman of Bachadhari, the Mughals then started a vigorous search for Bali Narayan. Gathering all the available resources, Mirza Nathan marched forward, and soon reached the domain of Raja Bar Duar, the most noted of the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol*, but did not find the fugitive there.†

To get a clue regarding Bali Narayan from the men of Bar Duar, Govinda had recourse to an amusing trick. Being an adept in their language, he falsely represented to the hillmen that, having secured his release from the Mughal camp by bribery, he had joined the fugitive Raja. As he was commissioned by the latter to gather his scattered forces before rejoining him, the whereabouts of the Raja must now be ascertained. The trick served its purpose. Being informed by the hillmen that Raja Bali Narayan had repaired, just before dusk, to the territory of one of his fathers-in-law—Bamun Raja, the Mughals hastened to that place and reached there at night, only to find that the fugitive had already left for the domain of another father-in-law of his, Kanol Raja by name. ‡ Though the pursuers were terribly exhausted by continuous march through hills and jungly regions, they continued their search into the territory of Kanol Raja, and demanded from him the surrender of "the thief of the *Padishah*," as Mirza Nathan styles Bali Narayan. The hill-chief, however, played the Mughals false. Though he agreed to hand over the fugitive to them, he connived at his escape from his domain, at the dead of night. Two of the wives of Bali Narayan, the daughters of Bamun Raja and Kanol Raja, were however captured. §

And of Bamun Raja and Kanol Raja.

A last attempt to get hold of Bali Narayan was now made by the Imperialists. As luck would have it, they came across

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* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 248b.

† *Ibid*, p. 249a.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 249b.

§ *Ibid*, p. 250a.

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him, at a short distance from the territory of Kanol Raja. A skirmish followed; though the whole family, with the entire belongings and war-materials of the Raja, was captured, he himself escaped to the place of his suzerain, the Ahom king.*

Bali Narayan evaded capture and sought refuge with the Ahom king.

Hopeless of effecting the capture of Bali Narayan, the Mughals, under Mirza Nathan, wended their way back. Shumarooed once more intercepted their path with 1000 followers, but had to beat a hasty retreat. † He then joined Bali Narayan. Crossing the Brahmaputra, the Mirza with his party soon reached the headquarters (Hajo).

Though the arch-enemy—Bali Narayan, as well as his chief officer, Shumarooed Kayeth, still remained at large, the whirl-wind military razzia of Mirza Nathan into the territories of the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol* was far from ineffective. It led to the submission of at least two of them—Bamun Raja and Kanol Raja, besides the great Raja of Bar Duar, and also brought immense booty into the possession of the Mughals. But the moral effect of the campaign far outweighed the material one. The dogged tenacity, untiring energy and firm resolve with which the Imperial commander Mirza Nathan, had traversed the hills and jungles of *Dakhinkol*, in the face of enormous odds, produced a great impression on the mind of the hill-chieftains, and took the wind out of their opposition. Within a short time after his return to Hajo, Mirza Nathan succeeded in securing the submission of the rest without much trouble.

Submission of the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol*, including Raja Bar Duar, Bamun Raja and Kanol Raja.

After a little pressure from the Mirza, Raja Bhu Singh, with his brother Man Singh and his maternal uncle Raja "Bhook," personally acknowledged Mughal suzerainty.‡ To safeguard the Imperial interests, a big fortification, with a deep

And Rajas Bhu Singh, Man Singh and Bhook.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 250b.

† *Ibid*, p. 251a. ‡ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 252a.

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ditch around, was made near the domain of the Raja. A detachment, under Khwaja Saadat Khan, sent against the Hangrabaria Raja, Koka Raja and Sanjai Raja, killed the first and compelled the other two to render submission.*

Meantime Akra Raja and his brother, who had been deputed (by Mirza Nathan) to capture the belongings of Raja Bali Narayan, in deposit with his friend Umed Raja of the upper-hills, played the Mirza false. They sent only a small portion of the property secured, and did not themselves rejoin him. Enraged at their duplicity, Mirza Nathan despatched a strong battalion to conquer the domains of Umed Raja and Akra Raja and his brother, and imprison them all. Though the former escaped, Akra Raja, with his brother, was got hold of, and produced before the Mirza in fetters.†

Imprisonment of Akra Raja and his brother by Mirza Nathan.

The maltreatment of the two hill-chiefs wounded the proud and independent spirit of their compeers, and was regarded by them as an act of deep humiliation. Most of them, who had out of their own accord joined the Imperialist ranks after their submission, took the earliest opportunity to withdraw, and to cast aside their lip-deep acknowledgment of suzerainty.‡ Thus the achievement of a strenuous period of struggle was lost, owing to a single act of indiscretion and imprudence on the part of Mirza Nathan. What was worse still, is the fact that this incarceration of the hill-chiefs soon involved the Mughals in a serious warfare, which greatly jeopardised their authority once again in the whole of *Dakhinkol* region.

Its evil effect—most of the hill-chiefs escaped and turned rebellious.

Another disappointment was in store for them. Hastah Raja, who had grown up under the fostering care of Mirza Nathan, informed the latter that he had captured Mamu Govinda, with his son. But before Mirza's men could reach his place to take

Another disappointment.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 252a.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 252b.

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the captive into their custody, the Raja, allured by the prospect of marrying his daughter, secretly set him free, and gave out that he had himself managed to escape. Mamu Govinda soon sought refuge with the Ahom king.*

Meanwhile one solid gain accrued to the Mughals. It was the capture of Parsuram with his sons, and the consequent pacification of the Solmari region. As I have already remarked, after the conquest of Amjanga and Rangjuli forts, Mirza Nathan had sent a detachment to the aid of the *thanahdar* of Solmari, exhorting him to make a vigorous attempt to capture Parsuram. Five days after the arrival of the reinforcement, Bal Bahadur Das (the local *thanahdar*) came upon Parsuram. The latter again escaped, but his wife, with two youngsters as well as the eldest son, was captured. Greatly perturbed at the imprisonment of his family, Parsuram desired to buy off its release, but it was of no avail. A batch of Afghans at last succeeded in catching him alive, and he was sent to Mirza Nathan at Hajo. †

Capture of Parsuram.

Sorely distressed at the humiliation of their kinsmen, and thirsting for revenge, all the hill-chieftains made a concerted endeavour to oust the Mughals from *Dakhinkol*, and gathered at Ranihat, near the Mughal fortified post there. (*c. May*, 1619). ‡ Their early attempts to make a fortification in front of it having proved futile, they appealed to the Ahom king for help, on the plausible ground of community of interests. The latter readily responded, and sent the Hati Barua, the "foremost of his wise officers," at the head of 80000 *paiks*, to the aid of the hill-chiefs. A Rajkhoa, a "Kharkhoka," a son of Raja Dimarua, Gopal Dalpati, Bali Narayan and Shumarooed also accompanied him. The Ahom king instructed his men to capture Mirza Nathan, the

The disaffected hill-chiefs, aided by the Ahom king, attacked the Imperial outpost of Ranihat, and laid it under a siege.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 251b.

† *Ibid*, p. 252a.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 252b.

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most turbulent of the Mughal officers, alive.* The Ahom army soon came down to Ranihat, and, in one night, fortified a hillock to the right of the Mughal fort. From it, as the base of operations, the Ahoms decided to march forward, under the shelter of a series of small stockades, and to surround Mirza Nathan on all sides. This was done, and the siege of Ranihat began.†

Two untoward events now happened, which greatly weakened the Imperial cause. The first was the murder of Govinda, the headman of Bachadhari, who had rendered valuable service in connection with the conquest of Rangjuli, the pursuit of Bali Narayan and the subjugation of the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol*. Govinda had been sent by Mirza Nathan (at his own request), with some troops, to defend his house at Khamargaon (near Bar Duar) against the attack of the rebels. He repulsed two assaults, but afterwards fell a victim to an act of private vengeance, committed by one of his followers, named Jadu Naik, in collusion with another man, titled Sonatan.‡ The second unfortunate incident was a serious wound received by one of Mirza's ablest officers, in a fray with the enemy.§

Undismayed by these adverse happenings, Mirza Nathan set himself to offer a stubborn opposition to the Ahoms. He strengthened the fortifications of Ranihat, and cleared away the jungles around, so as to afford no shelter to the opponents. He next made a small wooden stockade, blocking their route of march, and placed it in charge of Raja Satrajit, and Raja Bhu Singh. Not to be outwitted by their adversary, the Ahoms changed their path, turned to the right, and marched towards the Mughal fort, with the help of a series of wooden stockades, as planned before. An artificial barrier of wood, besmeared with mud, was next set up in front of the Imperialist fort, to check the progress of the Ahoms, but it proved useless. The latter

Mughal defensive measures.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 253a.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid*, p. 253b.

§ *Ibid.*

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continued their march under the cover of the stockades, the last of which almost stuck to the fort-wall of the Mughals.*

Finding his position seriously threatened, Mirza Nathan (with the elephants in front) now led a desperate charge against the steadily advancing enemy. This time he was successful, and the Ahoms had to cry halt. Further discomfiture was in store for them. Pressed hard by Mirza Nathan, they were compelled to evacuate, one after another, seven of their stockades. As the eighth one was set amidst hills and dense bamboo groves, it could not be taken. Under Mirza's orders, all the seven stockades were then levelled with the ground, and the 20000 wooden posts with which they were made, destroyed. Thus the work of more than a month was undone in half a *pahar*.†

This was a great set-back to the Ahoms, who for some time desisted from making any more stockade, and confined their activities to killing the elephants and horses of the Mughals, which used to pass by the foot of their own fort, for forage and drinking water. Mirza Nathan did away with the new difficulty by making a small fortified post on a stream within easy reach. The Ahoms next sought to obstruct effectively the supply of provisions to Ranihat, by deputing Mamu Govinda with 4000 men for that purpose.‡ To meet the new situation, the crafty Mirza set up two fortified posts, one at Garal, on the bank of the Brahmaputra, and the other at Haligaon (about 6 miles south-west of Garal), and arranged for the safe despatch of rations from the former to the latter, and thence to Ranihat, by a relay of men. But the heavy flood of the rains having washed away the Garal outpost, another post was made at Kookooria (about 4 miles west of Garal), and provisions were then conveyed with the help of elephants, instead of men. § To add to the troubles,

Siege of Ranihat prolonged for about 4 months. (*c.* May to August, 1619.)

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 254a.

† *Ibid* p. 255a.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Ibid.*

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a rebellion now broke out in the Chomooreea *parganah*. It was sponsored by "Panchkalla Jhulia," a step-brother of Raja Parikshit, but was soon put down, and the rebel was made to acknowledge the Imperial authority.*

With the advent of the rains, the Ahoms made an energetic move against the Imperialists under Mirza Nathan. Mamu Govinda was sent, with 10000 *paiks*, to capture the fort of Haligaon, and, failing that, to prevent the conveyance of rations from that place to the main fort at Ranihat. Thus threatened with starvation, Mirza Nathan himself went to meet Mamu Govinda at Haligaon, leaving the three fortifications at Ranihat (the main fort, the small stockade across the path of the Ahom fort, and the fortified post made on the stream near by, to ensure a regular supply of water) in charge of adequate garrisons. In co-operation with the men at Haligaon, Mirza Nathan succeeded in frustrating the designs of the enemy there, and put Mamu Govinda to flight.†

Meantime, taking advantage of Mirza Nathan's temporary absence from Ranihat, the Ahoms had launched a simultaneous attack on the three fortifications there. With the timely return of the Mirza, the enemy had to retreat, without accomplishing anything.‡

Though the siege of Ranihat thus dragged on for about four months (May to August, 1619), without any decisive result, the numerical superiority of the Ahoms was a source of great disquiet to the Mughals, whose numbers were further gradually thinned by the strenuous defensive warfare. Adequate help in men and materials, from Hajo, was now sent for.§

At this time, Parsuram, who had been long in captivity, made an attempt to regain his freedom by the payment of an adequate ransom. To enable him to find out the money, he was twice sent, under proper escort, to his native place. But as

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 255a.

† *Ibid*, p. 256a.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 256b.

§ *Ibid*.

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he meant mischief, and was not found to be serious in his gesture for freedom, he was placed in closer confinement.*

Meanwhile a change took place in the personnel of the Kamrup government, which reacted on the course of the conflict with the Ahoms. Owing to the excessive drinking habit of Qulij Khan, he was removed from office by the Bengal viceroy, and Shaikh Kamal was formally installed in his place. The new governor, who was inimically disposed towards Mirza Nathan, the brain of the Mughal warfare in *Dakhinkol*, did not send the latter adequate reinforcement, though hard pressure was brought to bear upon him, by the Mirza's agents at Hajo.†

Governmental changes in Kamrup.

Enraged at the long delay in finishing the struggle, the Ahom king severely reprimanded his chief officers, and exhorted them to gird up their loins for a decisive encounter. Leaving a detachment at Haligaon, the Ahom commanders, with their remaining forces, moved to Ranihat. At a place named "Ganjbaib," to the south-west of the Mughal fort, and just outside the range of their guns, a very high fortification, with a deep trench around, was made by more than 50000 men, in a night's time. Big guns were then mounted on it. In reply to this new move, the Mughals made a small stockade between the new stronghold of the enemy and their own fort, and garrisoned it adequately.‡

Renewed activity of the Ahoms.

Shumarooed Kayeth, who had all along been taking an active part in this protracted warfare, now created a false alarm amongst the Mughals, by giving out that Mamu Govinda had again been sent, with 10000 *paiks*, to a place five miles ahead of Haligaon, with a view to interrupting the supply of rations from the fort there to Ranihat. At this disquieting news, Mirza Nathan sent a detachment at Haligaon, under Khwaja Saadat Khan, to foil the designs of the enemy.§ An outpost was set up

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 257a.

† *Ibid*, p. 258a.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 257b.

§ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 258a.

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at Minari, about three miles south of Haligaon, and Khwaja Saadat got ready for a fight with Mamu Govinda. But he did not turn up ; so the Khwaja returned to Ranihat. *

Meanwhile interesting developments had taken place at Ranihat. Taking advantage of the temporary depletion of the garrison in the new Imperial stockade in the vicinity of Ganjbaib, a Rajkhoa (instructed by Shumarooed), with 6000 Assamese *paiks*, had made a vigorous attempt to take it by storm. † A hard struggle ensued. Three sallies to get into the fort were repulsed by the Mughals, who fought under the inspiration of Mirza Nathan. At last the Rajkhoa was compelled to retreat. ‡ In the midst of this preoccupation of Mirza Nathan and his party, Shumarooed himself, with 4000 *paiks*, made a determined attack upon the watch-post, made to ensure regular water-supply to the main (Mughal) fort.§ The ubiquitous Mirza managed to lead the Imperialists here as well. A vigorous defence was offered. But the tide of fortune now turned back. Though Khwaja Saadat's party soon joined Mirza Nathan, the enemy gradually got the better of him, and the watch-post was captured and set on fire by it. ‖

This defeat had a great demoralising effect. Totally disheartened and panic-stricken, the Imperialists took to their heels, and could not be rallied for a fresh encounter. Mirza Nathan, who did not lose heart, now concentrated all his attention on safeguarding his main fort and the two small stockades (made on the way of the old and the new Ahom forts respectively), and he instilled courage into the drooping spirit of his comrades.

The Ahoms, on the other hand, were greatly emboldened by their first taste of victory, and completed their siege operations, by raising in one night a huge fortification,

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 258b.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid*, p. 259a.

§ *Ibid*, p. 259b.

‖ *Ibid*, p. 260a.

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encircled by a deep trench, around the three remaining Mughal strongholds at Ranihat. Thus brought to bay by the enemy, the tiny band of men under Mirza Nathan, denuded of provisions and war-materials, were faced with the option of wholesale destruction or ignominious surrender.*

Decisive Ahom success—fort of Ranihat conquered, and Mirza Nathan driven from *Dakhinkol*, with great loss (*c.* September, 1619).

Though pitted against the overwhelming numbers of the Ahom army, Mirza Nathan was at first seized with a frenzy to fight till death. But on second thought, he gave up his desperate venture, and evacuated the fort of Ranihat at night. But the enemy which had already got scent of it, set fire to the fort, and harassed his retreat in all possible ways † A large number of the women of the harem were put to death by Mirza Nathan himself, while a good many of his soldiers committed suicide in despair. Mirza Nathan, with only 16 of his followers, at last arrived at Malikoti. ‡ Thence he moved to the left bank of the Brahmaputra, crossed the river in the teeth of bitter opposition of the Ahoms, leaving behind many of the animals, and reached Sualkochi, § where the officers from the head-quarters came to console him. This was at the end of September, 1619.‖

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* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p 261a.

† *Ibid*, p. 262a.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 262b. "Malleata", about 2 miles east of Minari, and 3¼ miles south-east of Haligaon, is probably meant.

§ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 264a. Sualkochi is on the right bank of the Brahmaputra, about 6 miles west of Pandu.

‖ Gait (History of Assam, pp. 110-11) gives a very brief account of this warfare, apparently on the basis of the *Buranjis* only, with the result that their inaccuracies also have crept into his work. The graphic account of Mirza Nathan, regarding the protracted Ahom-Mughal warfare in the rains of the year 1619, is corroborated in a general way by the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*, the *Purani Asama Buranji*, the Assamese *Buranji* of the late Jajnaram Deodhai Barua, and by Dr. Wade's History of Assam. As a contemporary who took a prominent part in the war, Mirza Nathan's version is necessarily more detailed, clear, and comprehensive than that of the *Buranjis* and Dr. Wade's book, and I have mainly relied on it.

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Thus after five months of hard fighting (May to September, 1619), the Mughals under Mirza Nathan, were defeated by the hill-chiefs, aided by the mighty army of the Ahom king. This was their first serious reverse since the disastrous Assam campaign of 1615. The loss of the strategic fort of Ranihat was a severe blow to the Imperial authority. The patient labours of Mirza Nathan for the pacification of *Dakhinkol* appeared to be lost, and Mughal power there was again thrown into the melting pot.*

Notwithstanding this difference, there is a remarkable agreement, in substance, between the two sources. They are unanimous with regard to the hero of the whole piece—Mirza Nathan, the energetic and resourceful Imperial officer of *Dakhinkol*. Though the name is spelt in different ways—"Mirza Nathal," "Mirza Nathan," "Mirza Nant," there can hardly be any doubt that it refers to one and the same man. That the struggle was protracted, and, that it ultimately ended in the Mirza's discomfiture and flight to Hajo, with heavy loss, is testified to by all. Amongst the *Buranjis* themselves, the account of the Ahom *Buranji* (reproduced almost verbatim by the late Jajnaram Deodhai Barua) is, however, the most exhaustive. It tells us of the indecisive skirmishes in the early phase, the race in wall-building of the combatants, followed by a decisive encounter in which the Mughals went down with heavy loss, and sought safety in flight. The time of the final retreat corresponds exactly to that derived from internal evidence in the *Baharistan* (*i.e.*, September, 1619). The *Purani Asama Buranji* (p. 92) gives a very short story, while Dr. Wade's version, though more detailed, is quite vague and colourless. Both the authorities appear to have fallen into an error (perpetuated by Gait in his History of Assam, pp. 110-11) in making the Mughals take the aggressive, by an attack on Raja Bali Narayan's territory. As Mirza Nathan clearly informs us, the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol* began the struggle to avenge their wrongs on Mirza Nathan, the Imperial *thanahdar* there, and, later on, called in the Ahom king to their help. Bali Narayan had nothing to do with this affair, except that he accompanied the reinforcing army sent by his suzerain. The Ahom *Buranji*, though lacking in details, lends general support to the *Baharistan* by suggesting that Mirza Nathan was on the defensive, and his opponents brought matters to a crisis, by an attack on his fort. It, however, omits all mention of Bali Narayan in this connection.

* I may note in passing that the discomfiture of the Mughals at Ranihat, reflects little credit on the efficiency of the Kamrup government. In spite of repeated requests for reinforcement, no effective help reached Mirza Nathan and his party, owing to personal jealousy between him and Shaikh Kamal.

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The honours of the struggle, however, remain with Mirza Nathan, who fought almost by himself quite unflinchingly, against the overwhelming numbers of the Ahoms and the hill-men of *Dakhinkol*. It is curious to note that though the latter initiated the warfare, and invited the former to their help, they appear to have played an insignificant part in its subsequent stages, when hostilities were mainly carried on by the Ahoms, together with Mamu Govinda and Shumarooed. The latter really played a very important part in the whole conflict, and it was greatly owing to his persistence that the Mughals were at last defeated with great loss.

The news of the disastrous defeat of the Mughals in *Dakhinkol*, thoroughly unnerved the Bengal viceroy Ibrahim Khan.* Being afraid lest the Royal Court should ascribe it to his removal of Qulij Khan from office, he speedily reversed his former deci-

* The *Ahom Buranji*, the Assam *Buranji* of the late Jajnaram Deodhai Barua, and Dr. Wade's book refer to an interesting sequel to the Mughal defeat of September, 1619. Encouraged by the prospect of regaining his ancestral domain, the Koch king Lakshmi Narayan, at this stage, began negotiations for the conclusion of peace and friendship between the Mughal commander (Shaikh Kamal) and the Ahom king Pratap Singh, through his agent Bir Kaji or Biru Karji. The Kaji saw the Ahom viceroy (Bar Phukan) at Gauhati, and was thence escorted to the capital, where he interviewed the king. The latter, contrary to all the canons of diplomacy, imprisoned the envoy, and decided to release him only when hostilities would be ended. The result of the peace-mission is not mentioned. But it is easy to infer that the foolish and thoughtless act of the Ahom king must have defeated its own object. The *Purani Asama Buranji* (pp. 91-92) gives a similar story of a peace-move, but it times the negotiations prior to 1619, and makes Bir Kaji not merely an agent, but also the sole mediator (omitting Lakshmi Narayan's name altogether). It is strange to note that not a word with regard to this incident finds a place in the *Baharistan*, which contains the most authoritative and the exhaustive account of the Ahom-Mughal warfare of this period so far brought to light. The other contemporary and non-contemporary Persian chonicles are also silent here. In view of the total absence of any corroborative evidence from the Mughal standpoint, as well as of the discrepancies in the *Buranjis*, especially with regard to the time-element, I am not disposed to accept the peace story as a genuine one.

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sion, and reinstated him to the chief command in Kamrup. *

Governmental changes in Kamrup.

The Khan was advised to help Mirza Nathan in retrieving his lost perstige and in re-establishing Mughal authority in *Dakhinkol.* But once more, dissensions amongst the officers, spoilt the cause of the Emperor. Qulij Khan, being at pique with Mirza Nathan for depriving him of his own *jagirs* after his dismissal, evaded meeting the Mirza at first. Afterwards when the latter himself visited Qulij Khan, he was deluded with a vague promise of help by the Khan, who soon moved to Hajo.†

Fully determined to remove the stigma of his last defeat, Mirza Nathan went to Jahangirabad, borrowed a large amount of money for himself, and utilised it in strengthening his depleted ranks. Waiting in vain for some time, on the bank of the Brahmaputra, for reinforcement from the new commander, Mirza Nathan crossed the river into *Dakhinkol*, and proceeding southward, reached a place four *kos* from Dhaknaboee, which stood on the bank of the Koolsi river (*c.* November, 1619).

Mirza Nathan proceeded to *Dakhinkol* to retrieve his former defeat.

Here a new enemy, Jadu Naik‡ by name, now confronted him. He appears to have been a local chieftain—a good second to Shumarooed in his dogged hostility to the Mughal Emperor. From the closing months of 1619 till his capture in 1623, Jadu Naik gave the Imperial officers a good deal of trouble, from his stronghold in the hilly and jungly region of the Duars, drained by the Koolsi river. Profiting by the evacuation of *Dakhinkol thanahs*, consequent on the recent defeat, Jadu Naik had risen in insurrection, and busied himself

And met Jadu Naik—a rebel chief, and defeated him. (*c.* November, 1619).

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* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 264b.

† *Ibid*, p. 265a.

‡ *Ibid.*

Jadu Naik is not mentioned by the *Buranjis*, or any Persian writer except Mirza Nathan.

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in fortifying the vicinity of Dhaknaboee,* with 4000 *paiks*. The jungles and the marshes with which the region abounded, having been rendered impassable owing to the mud and water of the parting rains, the Mughals, under Mirza Nathan, had to suffer great troubles in their march against the enemy. They crossed the river Koolsi, with a good deal of care and caution, at a convenient ford, and surprised the rebel, who fled hastily, giving up his unfinished fortification. † The victors then moved to Jamna (about 3 miles north-west of Dhaknaboee), and cutting the jungles on their way, soon reached Dhaknaboee, in face of hostilities of the inhabitants of the locality. Stockades of plantain trees were then made by Mirza Nathan, who halted there for help from the headquarters, but to no purpose. Thence he marched eastward, and encamped at Minari (about 2½ miles south of Haligaon, Dt. Kamrup), making a fortification there. ‡

Defeat of Raja Bali Narayan and the Ahom army at Minari (*c.* January, 1620) followed by the capture of Shumarooed and Mamu Govinda.

Informed of the arrival of the Mughals under Mirza Nathan at Minari, Shumarooed, who was then staying near the mouth of the Kalang river, at a place named Hangrabari (in Beltala *mauza*, *thanah* Gauhati), along with his chief, Raja Bali Narayan, and the leading officers of the Ahom king, at once moved there, and in two nights made a big fortification, adjoining a hill opposite to the Imperial stronghold. The hill-chiefs joined hands with Shumarooed now. He next dug down the rain-waters, deposited on the skirts of the hill, so that in one night, the environs as well as the interior of the Mughal fort were submerged in water. The men and the animals were reduced to a sad plight, and eagerly looked up to the arrival of help from Hajo. § At last, Ram Singh, son of Sarba Gosain,

* Dhaknaboee is on the right bank of the Koolsi river, about 10 miles south-west of Palasbari, and 12 miles south-east of Chomooreea *thanah*, District Kamrup.

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 265b.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 266a. § *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p.266a.

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and, Pashupati, son of Raja Madhusudan, reached Mirza Nathan's place with their men. The Mirza then led a vigorous attack upon the enemy fort, in two divisions, one from the rear, and the other from the front. A fierce engagement by land and water ensued. Though the Ahoms offered a brilliant defence, they were gradually worn out, and, unable to resist the forced entrance of the Mughals into their stronghold, took to their heels.* The victors then pursued them along the two secret tracks which ran from the fort. Shumarooed, after a desperate struggle in which he was wounded, fell into the hands of Mirza Nathan.† Mamu Govinda, the chief of Beltala, was also captured. (*c.* middle of January, 1620).

The victory at Minari, ‡ in the beginning of the year 1620, was an event of great significance in Kamrup history. Though it did not lead to any substantial material gain, its moral consequence was far-reaching. It restored the prestige of the Mughal arms, and was the signal for another attempt to bring the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol* under the pale of the Imperial authority. The crowning achievement was, however, the capture of Shumarooed, the sleepless disturber of the Mughal peace in southern Kamrup. It was indeed a great political triumph that after a ceaseless effort, he should be disarmed and made a prisoner. The capture of Mamu Govinda was also no mean feat. He appears to have been a faithful lieutenant of Shumarooed, and was of great assistance to him in his dogged defence of Rangjuli fort. Later on, he took a prominent part in the protracted siege of Ranihat.

To Mirza Nathan personally, it was a matter of no small gratification that he was successful in bringing down to his knees the persons who had inflicted a severe defeat upon him, only three months and a half before. The stain of his last reverse was thus wiped out, and he could now, with a proud face, set

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 267a.

† *Ibid.*

‡ The Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis* do not at all refer to this great victory won by Mirza Nathan.

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himself once more to re-establish Mughal authority in *Dakhinkol* on a secure basis.

The captive Shumarooed was a trump card in the hands of the astute Mirza, who was determined to use it to the best advantage. Instead of inflicting upon him the indignities and cruelties of a war-prisoner, Mirza Nathan accorded him a magnanimous and humane treatment, which struck the tender cords of the obdurate heart of the Koch rebel. Far from putting him in chains, Mirza Nathan had his wounds carefully attended to, and he assigned to him and his sons, adequate *jagirs* in *Dakhinkol*, for their maintenance. Overpowered with gratitude, and much ashamed of his persistent hostility towards so generous an enemy, Shumarooed induced his four sons and his wife to surrender to the Mughals, and himself promised eternal faithfulness and obedience to the Emperor.*

With his prestige fully redeemed, Mirza Nathan turned his attention towards the subjugation of the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol*, who had fallen away from him. The first to feel the weight of his arms, was Kanol Raja of Haldia Duar. A strong fortification was made near his domain, on which cannon were mounted, and a pillaging campaign was then started to compel himself and his subjects to submission. Greatly harassed, the hill-chief deserted his kingdom to seek refuge in the region of the upper-hills.‡ By way of a friendly gesture, he, however, suggested to Mirza Nathan the advisability of bringing to terms at first the greatest amongst them—Raja Bar Duar, so that his submission would invariably be followed by that of the lesser chiefs. Taking this cue, Mirza Nathan marched to the domain of Bamun Raja, "which lay between Haldia Duar and Bar Duar."†

Mirza Nathan's march to the domain of the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol* resulted in the conquest of Haldia Duar.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, pp. 267b-268a.

† *Ibid*, p. 268a.

‡ *Ibid*.

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Leaving a detachment of troops there for safeguarding the line of communication, Mirza Nathan proceeded to Bar Duar, where a fortified encampment was made. Bar Duar hat was stormed, and the victor then climbed the hill near by to attack the stronghold of the Raja. Unable to face his opponent, the hill-chief left his domain to seek shelter in the territory of Raja Khamranga* of the upper-hills, which, occupying as it did, the most strategic and secure position in the entire hilly region, had defied all previous attempts at its subjugation. †

And Bar Duar and the capture of its chief.

Armed with all the necessary information regarding that inaccessible spot, Mirza Nathan, with his light-armed troops, ventured thither. Khamranga hat, the most important place in the locality, was the first object of his attack, and he captured it without a blow. The Raja himself, with his consort, fell into his hands, when both of them were heavily intoxicated. When the hill-chief awoke from his stupor to find himself in chains, he determined to purchase his own freedom at the cost of that of his protege. Within three days, he handed over the Raja of Bar Duar, a captive, to Mirza Nathan. True to his words, the latter set free the Khamranga Raja, and gave him back his kingdom. ‡

As well as that of Khamranga.

The capture of Bar Duar Raja, and the storming of the impregnable hilly region of Khamranga, disarmed the opposition of the other hill-chieftains, and, one by one, all of them again tendered submission to Mirza Nathan. Profiting by his previous experience, the Mirza placed them under proper surveillance. §

Other hill-chiefs soon submitted again.

Pursuant to Shumarooed's advice, Mirza Nathan then established a fortified post at Hangrabari, and, leaving it

* Khamranga is just on the southern border of Bar Duar, and also south of Kanol Raja's domain.

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 268b.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Ibid*, p. 269a.

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in charge of an adequate garrison, came back to Ranihat. In response to a request of the officers at Hajo to receive in person the rewards sent from the Royal Court for his brilliant service, Mirza Nathan then went to Pandu.*

Loss of fort Hangrabari, owing to Raja Satrajit's machinations.

The short absence of Mirza Nathan from Ranihat led to serious consequences. Raja Satrajit, the friend of Shaikh Kamal, was inimically disposed towards the Mirza, and took advantage of the new situation to do him harm. He instigated Shumarooed to induce the Ahoms to launch an immediate attack upon the new outpost at Hangrabari. To facilitate the success of his design, the Raja, at the same time, secretly instructed the *bakshi* of Bengal, who had gone over to Hangrabari for the inspection of the garrison there, to insist upon its mustering outside the fort. The nefarious plan was carried to a great success. 10000 enemy *paiks* attacked the fort when it was almost empty, captured it without much difficulty and set it on fire, killing 700 Mughal soldiers.†

The loss of the frontier post of Hangrabari was a source of great discomfiture to Mirza Nathan. Apprehending that the Ahoms would next attack the *thanah* of Ranihat, he hastened there from Pandu, and strengthened the fortifications. Owing to the machinations of Shaikh Kamal and Qulij Khan, Raja Satrajit, Raja Madhusudan and the other Imperialist officers of the headquarters who had gone over to Ranihat, departed at this juncture, on some pretext or other, and Mirza Nathan was thus left to shift for himself. As ill-luck would have it, a heavy downpour now (*c.* middle of August, 1620) washed away the fortifications there (Ranihat), and Mirza Nathan was compelled to remove his *thanah* to a safe place, about a *kos* distant from Haligaon, and to fortify it. He spent a month here in the pacification of *Dakhinkol* region. During this time, another scheme for a night-attack on Mirza's fort was planned by the Ahoms, at the instigation of Shumarooed, but it fell through. ‡

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 269b.

† *Ibid*, p. 270a.

‡ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 270b

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The rainy season being soon at its height (*c.* middle of September, 1620), Mirza Nathan thought it unsafe to stay even in his new stronghold. He crossed the Brahmaputra over to *Uttarkol*, and encamped at Sualkochi. The Ahoms were not slow to take advantage of Mirza Nathan's departure to carry on plundering campaigns around the *Dakhinkol* outposts. A strong detachment was sent by the Mirza to Minari, the central spot in the region, to safeguard the Imperial interests there.*

As a result of more than two years of strenuous exertions, Mirza Nathan succeeded in his task of consolidation of the Imperial authority in *Dakhinkol*. With the exception of Bali Narayan and Jadu Naik, all the other enemies of the Mughal government there, were now thoroughly worsted. To prevent a recurrence of troubles, a policy of close surveillance was adopted. All the hill-chieftains, Shumarooed Kayeth with his entire family, Parsuram with his sons, Raja Bali Narayan's wife with her sons and a daughter, and Mamu Govinda, were accordingly put in close confinement.†

The hill-chiefs and the other rebels placed in confinement.

In response to repeated requests of the Bengal viceroy to produce the captured rebels before him, Mirza Nathan soon left Kamrup for Jahangirnagar (*c.* end of September, 1620).‡

A long gap now follows in the history of Kamrup. Mirza Nathan was absent for a period of about eight to ten months (*c.* September, 1620, to the beginning of July, 1621),§ and no noteworthy event appears to have taken place during the interval. Qulij Khan continued to be the officer-in-charge, and Shaikh Kamal came back to Jahangirnagar. Early in July, 1621, Ibrahim Khan Fathjang promoted Mirza Nathan to the *mansab* of 300 personal and 150 horse, and directed him to take formal charge again of the Imperial outposts

A gap in the history of Kamrup (*c.* September, 1620, to July, 1621).

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 271a.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Ibid*, p. 273a.

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in *Dakhinkol.* * Before he could proceed to attend to his new duties, his service was required in putting down a formidable insurrection in *Uttarkol.*

Rebellion in Khonthaghat and its initial success (*c.* August, 1621).

It originated thus. An officer of Qulij Khan was sent to Khonthaghat, with adequate equipments, to capture wild elephants. Though a good many of them were secured, with the help of professional elephant-catchers, they somehow escaped. The rash and inexperienced officer held the elephant-catchers responsible, and punished them severely. This cruel treatment gave so much offience that they soon rose in open rebellion, killed the Mughal officer in a night-attack, and captured all the royal elephants. They next proclaimed Bhaba Singh as their king, and, under his banner, marched from Khonthaghat towards Jahangirabad.

The plundering incursions (by boat) indulged in *Dakhinkol*, at this inopportune moment, by Bal Bahadur Das, an officer of Mirza Nathan, added to the trouble. Taking advantage of the absence of the war-boats from Jahangirabad, the insurgents hastened their pace, and attacked the place vigorously. Dost Beg, who had been sent (by Qulij Khan) to the succour of the garrison at Jahangirabad, was killed, and the rebels subsequently stormed the Imperial fort and captured the city, imprisoning the whole family of Qulij Khan † (*c.* end of August, 1621). They soon secured all the royal elephants there, and followed it up by the occupation of the fort of Rangamati. The fall of Jahangirabad, followed by that of Rangamati, severely undermined the military prestige and the political authority of the Mughals. It appeared as if the region west of the Manas river had irretrievably slipped off.

The news of the formidable rebellion reached the Bengal viceroy in no time. As he was then involved in putting down an inroad of the Maghs, he was not in a position to send adequate reinforcement to Kamrup. He entrusted Mirza

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 273a.

† *Ibid*, pp. 275a, 276a.

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Nathan with the task of quelling the revolt, and gave him about 1000 men and 50 war-boats only, for that purpose.* As the rains were at the height (*c.* September, 1621), Mirza Nathan had to provide boats for all his men and animals, and supplement otherwise the meagre war-materials with his own resources. He borrowed a *lakh* of rupees, and spent it in hiring or purchasing boats and gathering experienced men to ply them. †

Mirza Nathan deputed to put down the revolt.

With his equipments complete, Mirza Nathan left Jahangirnagar for Kamrup. When he reached Patladah,‡ he was informed by the spies that the rebels had marched south-west from Jahangirabad, and fortified Jamyra, to the north of Kari Bary. A detachment, with 30 boats, was sent, which defeated the enemy and captured its post. § Advancing further, Mirza Nathan got news that Afzal Khan, the *thanahdar* of Baghuan, had been reduced to great straits by a band of local rebels. Mastali Beg, a trusty officer of Mirza Nathan, was sent with some war-boats to his relief. As soon as he reached Boalia, ‖ the rebels got alarmed, and hastily took to their heels, leaving the *thanahdar* alone. ¶

Mirza Nathan then proceeded along the Brahmaputra direct towards Khonthaghat—the hotbed of disaffection and trouble. When he reached the confluence of the river Khanpur with the Brahmaputra, he learnt that some rebels had built two stockades, one on each bank of the river (Khanpur), in front of Ghalopara.$ With a view to disputing the passage of the river, Mirza Nathan

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* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 276a.

† *Ibid.* p. 277a.

‡ Patladah is on the right bank of the river Brahmaputra, opposite to the Kari Bary Hills.

§ *Ibid*, p. 277b.

‖ Boalia is four miles off the Brahmaputra, in Kalumalupara *mauza*, District Goalpara.

¶ *Ibid*, p. 277b.

$ Golapara, in Khonthaghat *mauza*, District Goalpara, is meant.

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cautiously marched to the vicinity of the enemy strongholds, and made two stockades in front of them. Three divisions of his troops then attacked the rebel posts, and, after a hard struggle, got possession of them. *

His supersession by Shaikh Kamal.

At this time Mirza Nathan was formally informed about the orders of the Bengal *subahdar*, regarding his supersession by Shaikh Kamal, as the commander of the expeditionary force. † The proud Mirza refused point-blank to serve under Shaikh Kamal, and resolved to expedite his own work so as to leave no scope for him. Crossing the river Khanpur, he halted at an island of the Brahmaputra, and was there reinforced by his own men, stationed in the various *thanahs* of *Dakhinkol*. Under instructions from Qulij Khan, his officers with their men also joined Mirza Nathan. ‡

Mirza Nathan defeated the rebel chief Bhaba Singh and recaptured Jahangirabad and Rangamati from him.

Meantime the new commander, Shaikh Kamal, with his party, reached in front of Rangamati, and encamped at an island in the Brahmaputra. Next, he moved towards Jahangirabad, and made a stockade on the right bank of the river Gadadhar. Anxious to avoid meeting the Shaikh, and, at the same time, eager to anticipate him in putting down the rebels, Mirza Nathan, with his forces, proceeded in the same direction, but encamped on the left bank of the river, opposite to the Shaikh. § A reconnoitring party was then sent up the river Gadadhar to Panabo, but no trace of the enemy was found. The Mirza then moved to Panabo, and made a fortified station there. ‖ Thence he moved slowly towards Jahangirabad, along the Gadadhar, in close co-operation with the land army, which marched, clearing the dense jungles on its bank. Soon Mirza Nathan

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 278b.
† *Ibid*, p. 279a.
‡ *Ibid*, p. 279b.
§ *Ibid*, p. 280a.
‖ *Ibid*, p. 280b.

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came in sight of the fort of Jahangirabad (situated on the west bank of the river Gadadhar), which was then in the grip of Bhaba Singh, * the rebel chieftain. The latter had built a watch-post on the bank of the Gadadhar opposite to Jahangirabad, and, with 12000 troops, obstructed the passage of Mirza Nathan across it. The Mirza succeeded in crossing the river in the teeth of great opposition. † His next act was an attack on the rebel stronghold, which was captured, and the garrison put to flight. ‡ Jahangirabad was soon re-occupied (*c.* October, 1621).

The recapture of the city turned the tide of affairs in favour of the Mughals. The Koch rebels got panic-stricken, and, that very night, evacuated Rangamati as well without a struggle. Most of the royal elephants were now recovered. §

Dying embers of revolt put out by Shaikh Kamal.

Thus after more than three months of hard fighting (*c.* October to December, 1621), the two main strongholds in western Kamrup were recovered. The prestige of the Imperial army was restored, and the back of the rebels was broken. It remained only to capture the rebel chief, with the rest of the royal elephants in his possession. The main task of Mirza Nathan having been successfully performed, he now started for his station in *Dakhinkol*, leaving Shaikh Kamal to give a finishing touch to it. ‖ The Koch rebel had taken shelter in a hilly stronghold, south of the Brahmaputra, named Takunia, and the Shaikh now drove him therefrom. Unnerved by the successive defeats, and perturbed by the relentless pursuit of the Mughals, Bhaba Singh voluntarily let loose the remaining elephants, and subsequently released the whole family of Qulij Khan from confinement.¶ The rebel chief having been totally

* One of the 18 sons of Raja Raghu Deb (*vide* the *Darrang Raj Bansabali*, p. 132).

† *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 281a.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 281b.

§ *Ibid.*

‖ *Ibid.* p. 282b.

¶ *Ibid.*

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humbled, Shaikh Kamal spared him personal liberty. The Khonthaghat region having thus been cleared of sedition, was given out, on lease, to a Koch chief, Gopal Jhulia by name. *

Let us now follow the fortunes of Mirza Nathan in *Dakhinkol*. Crossing the Brahmaputra, he reached the hilly region now covered by the Habraghat *parganah* (Goalpara District). A band of disaffected Koches soon fortified a strategic position in the hills, obstructing his passage. A hard struggle ensued, and the insurgents were at last defeated and put to flight. † Resuming his march, Mirza Nathan crossed over to *Uttarkol*, and rested for some time at Sualkochi. (*c.* January-February, 1622). Then, with renewed energy, he turned his attention towards putting down Jadu Naik, the only stubborn *Dakhinkol* chieftain who had as yet escaped Imperial subjection.‡

Mirza Nathan went to *Dakhinkol* and attacked the rebel chief, Jadu Naik.

Mirza Nathan moved to the south of the Brahmaputra and encamped at the sands of Nagarbarra. § A three-fold attack on Jadu Naik was planned. One division, under Mustafa Quli Beg, marched by way of Amjanga, the second one proceeded through Rangjuli under Habib Khan, the *thanahdar* of Jamyra, while the third division, headed by Saif Khan Lodi, moved along the hilly region of Jamyra. Unable to face the combined attack, the crafty rebel chief decided to fight the Mughals singly. First, he led a vigorous night-attack upon the second division, but was soon compelled to retreat. Two other successive attempts upon the first and the third detachments respectively, proved equally futile. The three Imperial divisions were then left free for a joint attack upon Jadu Naik. The latter for a time avoided direct encounter, and indulged

And defeated him.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 283a.

† *Ibid.* ‡ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 283b.

§ Nagarberra is situated on one of the *chars* of the Brahmaputra, just south of the Nagarberra Hills, about 10 miles north-west of Chomoorcca *thanah*, District Kamrup.

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in a sort of guerilla warfare in which he harassed the Mughals by blocking the path of rations and water supply. But it led to no substantial result. He then plucked up courage to make a vigorous night-attack on the combined Mughal host at Jamyra. Three sallies were made to get into the Imperial fort, but these did not succeed. Jadu Naik was at last wounded, and compelled to fly away with his men. * (*c.* early in May, 1622).

The defeat sustained by Jadu Naik at Jamyra, put an end to his mischievous activities for sometime. Owing to the advent of the rains, the Imperialist operations were now postponed. Mirza Nathan returned to Sualkochi, leaving some of his trusty officers in charge of the *thanahs* of *Dakhinkol*. †

Fresh rebellions and governmental changes.

During the absence of Mirza Nathan, two important incidents happened there. One was an insurrection of the people of Khatripak (in Chomooreea *mauza*, District Kamrup). It was soon put down. The other was the acknowledgment of the Imperial suzerainty by the son of Dimarua Raja. ‡ He visited Mirza Nathan at Sualkochi, and was promised recognition as a king, and then sent back to his domain. The submission of the son and heir of the powerful chief of Dimarua was a great political gain. But the machinations of Raja Satrajit spoilt it altogether. The Raja, out of spite for Mirza Nathan, allied himself with Ganesh Narayan, the Brahmin officer of Raja Bali Narayan, and incited him to make a sudden attack on the realm of the new vassal. The latter was taken unawares and killed. § At the end of the rains (*c.* November, 1622), a rebellion broke out afresh in Kamrup, but was soon quelled. Changes in the

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 284a.

† *Ibid.*

‡ The *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 88, tells us that Mangal Raja, son of Prabhakar, king of Dimarua, acknowledged the vassalage of the Ahom king in 1538 *Saka* (1616 A. D.). As is apparent from the *Baharistan*, the date of the submission of the prince should be shifted forward to 1622 A. D.

§ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 284b.

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personnel of the government followed. The glaring incompetence of Qulij Khan led to maladministration and misappropriation of the Imperial revenues. He was now finally relieved from office, and Shaikh Kamal was left virtully as the chief officer. *

At this time the meritorious service of Mirza Nathan was recognised by the Royal Court (*c.* end of November, 1622). He was decorated with the title of *Shitab Khan*, and promoted to the *mansab* of 300 personal and 150 horse. His *jagirs* were also increased, and the *parganah* of Khonthaghat was now included in them. †

Mirza Nathan's distinctions—titled *Shitab Khan.*

From the end of the year 1622 till the beginning of 1625 (when the *Baharistan* comes to an abrupt end), the history of Kamrup, as recorded by Mirza Nathan, takes the form of a dry chronicle of isolated incidents, chiefly centring round his own life, without any continuity or unity whatsoever. Details of *khedah* operations, governmental changes and quarrels and jealousies of the brother officers loom largely before the author, and fill up too much space in his work. The only event of real political importance mentioned, is the persistent hostility of Jadu Naik, the Koch rebel, which ended at last in his capture and subsequent murder.

Chief features of Kamrup history from the end of 1622 to the beginning of 1625 A. D.

Internal dissensions now occupy a prominent place in Kamrup history. Shaikh Kamal fell out with Mir Sufi, the *diwan*, *bakshi* and *waqia-navis*, and their quarrels assumed such proportions as to compel the Bengal viceroy (early in March, 1623) to send Mir Sams, a friend of his, to make them up. After proper enquiries, the *diwan* was found to be at fault, and he was made to resign his post. ‡ In the beginning of

Internal dissensions.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 283b.

† *Ibid.* p. 284b.

‡ *Ibid*, pp. 285b to 286b.

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April, 1623, Shaikh Kamal fell a victim to the witchery of Mir Sams, who coveted his office. But the Mir, in his turn, was soon struck with a severe malady, and compelled to leave Kamrup. *

Upon the death of Shaikh Kamal, Mirza Bahram, a nephew of the wife of Ibrahim Khan Fathjang, was selected as his successor, and Mir Sufi was reappointed to his post. † A long and bitter quarrel now broke out between the *diwan* and Shitab Khan, regarding the latter's emoluments of the *jagirs*. The attempt of the new chief (Mirza Bahram) to compose it proved fruitless. At last an officer sent by the viceroy from Jahangirnagar, poured oil over the troubled waters. ‡

As peace was now reigning in *Dakhinkol*, Shitab Khan left it to beguile his time by participating in a *kheda* operation in his new *jagir* of Khonthaghat. The wild tribes living in the inaccessible hills bordering on Bhutan in the north, were pacified by the customary entertainments, and the success of the *khedah* was thereby ensured. But the hills and jungles with which the *jagir* abounded, offered a great obstacle to the elephant-catchers, and, in spite of great care, only seven elephants could be secured. §

Kheda operations in Khonthaghat by Shitab Khan.

After spending some time in breaking in the wild elephants, Shitab Khan left Khonthaghat for Sualkochi. On the way, he halted at Bagribari, ‖ and thence passed to *Dakhinkol* to check the growing pretensions of Jadu Naik. He reached Nagarbera, and next moved to Bhojmala. ¶

Jadu Naik, with 8000 *paiks*, now blocked the path of Shitab Khan. He offered a determined resistance to the advance of

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 286b.

† *Ibid*, p. 287a.

‡ Great details of the quarrel and the accompanying incidents are given in pp. 287a-289b of the *Baharistan*.

§ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 287b-89a.

‖ Bagribari is in Khuntaghat *mauza*, District Goalpara.

¶ Bhojmala is in Habraghat *mauza*, District Goalpara.

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the latter, and drove him back three times. At last the Koch rebel was wounded, and such a great confusion arose in his ranks that he was soon compelled to seek shelter in the surrounding hills. * Shitab Khan closely pursued the fugitive, and soon overtook him in his refuge on a hill-top, and captured it. Jadu Naik then fled to the hills higher up. Determined to give him no respite, the Khan sent a detachment under Nek Muhammed Beg to pursue him, with the help of bamboo palanquins (*dolis*). Three of his new posts having been destroyed, the rebel in despair fled with his family to the domain of Raja Nilirangili, the chief of the fourth series of the upper-hills. † The Mughals followed him there as well. The hill-Raja at the outset captured Jadu Naik, apparently with a view to securing the good-will of the Mughals by handing him over to them. But he afterwards changed his mind, and got ready for an encounter. An attack on the Mughal camp was made, but with no success. Negotiations then began for a compromise. In return for the delivery of the fugitive with his family, Raja Nilirangili was promised suitable rewards, together with his formal installation as the head of all the chiefs of the upper-hill region. The Raja took in the bait, and handed over Jadu Naik and his family to Nek Muhammad Beg. ‡ This was at the end of 1623.

His capture of Jadu Naik.

The capture of Jadu Naik, the last of the sturdy independent chiefs of *Dakhinkol*, was a finishing touch to the work of consolidation of the Imperial power there, for which sole credit is due to Shitab Khan. After his latest triumph, he returned to his residence at Sualkochi. Some time later (early in 1624), another attempt to capture elephants in his Khonthaghat *jagir* was made, but only one elephant was caught. §

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* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 290b.

† *Ibid*, p. 291a.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 291b.

§ *Ibid*, p. 295b.

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Meantime a great upheaval in the Imperial politics took place. Early in 1623, Shah Jahan, the third but the ablest and the most energetic of the sons of Emperor Jahangir, revolted, and, after a chequered career, entered Bengal (November, 1623). His attempts to win over the viceroy—Ibrahim Khan Fathjang having failed, he met him in an open encounter on the bank of the Ganges, near Akbarnagar (Rajmahal), in May, 1624, and completely defeated him. The valiant Khan lost his life in battle. *

Rebellion of Prince Shah Jahan.

The defeat and death of the ruler of Bengal at the hands of the rebel prince, gave rise to great political and administrative disorder in Kamrup. Anxious to strengthen his cause by establishing his partisans in positions of power and trust, Shah Jahan introduced a wholesale change in the personnel of the governments of Bengal and Kamrup. Dorab Khan was appointed *subahdar* of Bengal in place of the late Ibrahim Khan.

And its effect on Kamrup government.

Shitab Khan, worldly wise as he was, lost no time in sailing with the wind, and readily joined the ranks of the triumphant rebel. He was entrusted by Shah Jahan with the government of Kamrup, pending the appointment of a permanent incumbent in place of Mirza Bahram who had been ousted from power. † The last *diwan* (Mir Sufi) having already left work, Shitab Khan appointed in his place one Akalaki, who possessed local experience. But he himself had soon to make room for another. At Patna, on his way back from Bengal, early in June, 1624, Shah Jahan promoted Zahid Beg Bokhari to the *mansab* of 3000 personal and 3000 horse, conferred on him the title of Zahid Khan, and sent him as the head of the Kamrup government. ‡

Swecping governmental changes.

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* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 294b.

† *Ibid*, p. 298b.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 301b.

Shitab Khan was greatly disappointed at his supersession, and decided to leave Kamrup before the arrival of Zahid Khan. Appointing his nephew temporarily as the officer-in-charge at Hajo, and entrusting his own *bakshi* Badri Das with the charge of Jahangirabad, he started for Jahangirnagar to meet the rebel prince. * Reaching Patladah, he learnt that the latter had already left for Akbarnagar. So he moved thither. Meantime Shah Jahan had reached Patna, and thence ordered Shitab Khan to meet him there without delay. Shitab Khan arrived at Patna, about the end of June, 1624, and joined the rebel prince. The latter put the Khan in charge of "Gaur," and sent him back to Akbarnagar. †

Shitab Khan's activities.

In Kamrup, the nephew of Shitab Khan, Mafatah by name, acted as the governor till the arrival of Zahid Khan. One important event took place during his regime. Jadu Naik, who had already been captured, was now put to death. ‡ Early in July, 1624, Zahid Khan reached Kamrup and assumed charge of his office. §

A few months after (by the end of October, 1624), the tide of Shah Jahan's fortune rolled back. Completely defeated by the forces of Jahangir at the decisive battle on the river Tons, the rebel prince hurried to Bengal *via* Patna, for the second time. He reached Akbarnagar about the 8th of January, 1625, and stayed there for about three weeks, at the end of which, he finally left for the Deccan.

Turning of Shah Jahan's fortune.

The defeat and discomfiture of Shah Jahan led the officers appointed by him in Bengal and Kamrup to fall off from their allegiance and reaffirm their loyalty to the old Emperor. In spite of his threatening *farmans* to the prominent officials at Hajo *e. g.*, Zahid Khan, Shaikh Shah Muhammad (son of the

Its effect on Kamrup history.

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 302a.

† *Ibid*, p. 307b.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 305a.

§ *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 325b.

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late Shaikh Kamal), Raja Satrajit, Raja Lakshmi Narayan, Raja Madhusudan, Raja Raghunath of Shushang and Akalaki, the *diwan*, they all turned their back upon him, and tried to ingratiate themselves again into the favour of Jahangir. Shitab Khan too followed suit. He accompanied the rebel prince, on his final departure from Bengal, a short distance from Akbar nagar, and then gave him the slip. This was early in February, 1625. *

With the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth century, an interesting and eventful period in the history of Kamrup comes to a close. As a result of more than a decade of strenuous warfare against the various rebel elements in *Uttarkol* and *Dakhinkol*, substantial gains seem to have been attained. In the region west of the river Manas in *Uttarkol*, more than one serious attack on the Mughal strongholds of Jahangirabad and Rangamati had been successfully repulsed, and the Khonthaghat region, the hotbed of political distemper, had been rendered quiet.

Retrospect of Kamrup history during the period 1612-25—Mughal position in *Uttarkol* consolidated.

With the capture of Nobar Raja, followed by the complete discomfiture of Bhaba Singh, the Koch chief, the brain of the local rebels disappeared, and the embers of disaffection died out in no time. In Kamrup proper, the most dogged enemy, Sonatan Koch, was thoroughly worsted, and his strongholds of Dhamdhama stormed. The end of the internal quarrels amongst the Imperial officers, and the establishment of unity of policy and administration, strengthened enormously the political position. The Mughals were thus enabled to withstand a gigantic attack on their headquarters at Hajo (in the winter of 1617), by Bali Narayan, backed by his political suzerain, the Ahom king. The decisive defeat sustained at that time deterred him from venturing again upon the Kamrup capital, at least during the remaining years of Jahangir's reign.

It is however in *Dakhinkol* that more solid results were achieved. Thanks to the military and administrative skill,

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 328b.

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combined with diplomatic tact, of Mirza Nathan (Shitab Khan), Mughal authority there was quite firmly established. The chieftains of the upper and lower hill-regions were all, by this time, made to feel the weight of Mughal arms, and were rendered incapable of swerving from their path of loyalty to the Emperor. The Rajas of the lower-hills *e. g.*, Bar Duar Raja, Rani Raja, Bamun Raja, and Kanol Raja, were tactfully removed from their domains and kept under close surveillance at the Bengal capital, and there made to dance attendance at the viceregal Court. With regard to the chiefs of the hills higher up, *e. g.*, Khamranga Raja and Raja Nilirangili, a more politic and generous policy was adopted. They were reinstated to their domains, after they had acknowledged Imperial vassalage and promised to harbour no rebels any more. A net-work of fortified posts, adequately garrisoned, was established at strategic places, such as, Rangjuli, Solmari, Baljanah, Ranihat, Minari and Hangrabari, with a view to preserving internal order and withstanding external attack.

And also in *Dakhinkol.*

The result of this policy was eminently successful. Never during the remaining years of Jahangir's reign, or, during the long reign of his son and successor, Shah Jahan, do the historians record any more struggle between the Mughals and the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol.* The steadfast allegiance of the latter, deprived the Ahom king of any further opportunity for jeopardising Mughal political supremacy in Kamrup, by secret help in men and money or by open warfare as an auxiliary. No longer could the disaffected elements in *Dakhinkol* expect to have a sure place of refuge, in case of need, in the hilly and jungly region of the Duars. The nefarious activities of Parsuram, Shumarooed and Mamu Govinda—nightmares to the local *thanahdars*, thus stopped once for all. The enemies which the Mughals had still to subdue *e. g.*, Chandra Narayan and Bali Narayan, fought primarily on their own account, and not on behalf of, or supported by the hill-chiefs, though very often aided by the Ahom king.

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Very little is known regarding the history of Kamrup during the closing years of Jahangir's reign. * It was a time of great political turmoil and administrative disorder in Mughal India, and their reverberations must have reached the distant north-east frontier province. Prince Shah Jahan had raised the standard of rebellion against his father, and though he had suffered a serious reverse near Allahabad, in the autumn of 1624, he was as yet far from being humbled. The whole energy of the Imperial government was devoted to the putting down of this formidable insurrection.

History of Kamrup after the year 1625 obscure.

In Bengal, the rebel Prince's whirlwind military campaign, ending in the defeat and death of the viceroy, had greatly perturbed the political condition, and this necessarily reacted on the Imperial authority in Kamrup. After Shah Jahan's final retreat from Bengal, Jahangir quickly recalled Prince Parviz who had gone thither in his pursuit, and entrusted the province to his great general Mahabat Khan. Mahabat beheaded Dorab Khan, and, for some time, ruled Bengal with absolute power. He was then called to the presence of the Emperor, and his son, Khanahzad Khan, was appointed to act for him. Soon after, Mahabat Khan rose in rebellion and joined Shah Jahan. Consequently, Khanahzad Khan was superseded in 1626, and Mukarram Khan (the victor of Kamrup) was selected in his place.

Contemporary Bengal history.

Taking advantage of the short and weak regime of Khanahzad Khan, Bali Narayan, ever on the look-out to harass the Mughals, crossed over to *Dakhinkol* and captured Luki Duar (occupying the extreme south-west corner of Kamrup) and "Bhaomanti" (*parganah* Barontee to the north-east

Bali Narayan's attack on *Dakhinkol* (*c.* 1626).

* The *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, which supplies such a valuable and exhaustive history of Kamrup during the greater part of Jahangir's reign, is silent after 1625. Other authorities are few, and their information meagre. A short passage in the *Padishahnamah*, a stray reference in the *Buranjis*, or a casual remark of a foreign traveller are all we have to build on.

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of Luki Duar). Thus the whole of *Dakhinkol* (in Kamrup proper) was overrun without any opposition. Khanahzad Khan, whose eyes were fixed on the rapid changes nearer home, was too careless and indifferent to the losses suffered in the distant north-east frontier.

Its success.

Zahid Khan, Shah Jahan's nominee, apparently continued to be in charge of Kamrup affairs. Without any hope of reinforcement from Bengal, he was, by himself, utterly incapable of checking the inroad of Bali Narayan. The result was a loss of prestige to the Imperial authority and also financial disaster. As rebellion is contagious, Bali Narayan's success soon encouraged the vassal zamindars of *Dakhinkol* to fall off from their allegiance, and at the same time inspired the recalcitrant Mughal subjects to stop the payment of tribute. *

After this event, the history of Kamrup till the death of Jahangir in October, 1627, is totally blank. A few references here and there, throw but scanty light on this obscure period.

Kamrup history of 1626-27 A. D. turns round the career of Raja Satrajit.

While in Bengal there was a rapid succession of viceroys, Kamrup appears to have continued to be ruled by Zahid Khan till the end. The most important incident in the history of this period, is the gradual defection of Raja Satrajit to the side of the Ahom king. Son of Mukunda, zamindar of Bhusna, Satrajit had an interesting and chequered career. He had acknowledged the Imperial overlordship at the beginning of Alau-d din Islam Khan's viceroyalty in Bengal, and, by his faithfulness and loyalty, became a pillar of strength to his suzerain. He took a leading part in the Kamrup expedition, and was for a short time left in charge of the Imperial fleet at Pandu, after the conquest of the country. Though ordered back to Jahangirnagar by the successor of Islam Khan, the Raja somehow evaded compliance,

* *Padishahnamah*, Vol. 11. p. 70. This successful raid of Kamrup by Bali Narayan is not mentioned by the *Buranjis* or the other authorities. But we have no reason to disbelieve the clear evidence furnished by the *Padishahnamah*.

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and continued to serve in the new realm. He accompanied Sayyid Abu Bakr in his campaign, fought valiantly with the Ahoms on the bank of the Bharali river till he was badly wounded, and then fled to Hajo in a boat. Later on, he aided Shaikh Ibrahim *krori* in dislodging Raja Bali Narayan from Sahorabari in Darrang. He also helped the *thanahdar* of Barnagar against the inroads of Sonatan Koch. Satrajit took rather an inglorious part in the valiant defence of Hajo (in the winter of 1617). Unable to face the Ahoms, he gave up a fortified post on an island in the Brahmaputra (between Hajo and Pandu) and fled to the headquarters. Later on (early in 1618), he rendered good service in connection with the protracted siege of Rangjuli fort. He does not appear to have taken part in the defeat at Ranihat (September, 1619), or in the subsequent victory over the Ahoms at Minari (January, 1620).

Up to this time, Raja Satrajit appears at his best, and was very faithful to the Mughal cause. But as early as the spring of 1620, a change in his attitude is noticeable. Out of spite for Mirza Nathan, the captor of Shumarooed, he instigated the latter to induce the Ahoms to attack the frontier outpost of Hangrabari in *Dakhinkol*, during the Mirza's temporary absence from Ranihat. Further, he facilitated the success of the enterprise by instructing secretly the *bakshi* of the Bengal *subah* to insist on the inspection of the garrison at Hangrabari, outside the fort. As a result of his machinations, the outpost was lost. Later on, in the autumn of 1622, he induced Ganesh Narayan, the Brahmin officer of Raja Bali Narayan, to make a surprise attack by night on the son of the Dimarua Raja who had acknowledged Mughal suzerainty. The attack was successful and the prince was killed. The death of such an influential vassal was a real loss to the Mughals.

His rebellious actions.

These are the two hostile acts of Raja Satrajit, recorded by Mirza Nathan. In spite of his evil deeds, the Raja continued to reside at Hajo as an officer of the frontier realm. Along with his colleagues, he went over to the side of the rebel prince

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Shah Jahan, but deserted him as soon as he was in distress. After Mirza Nathan had left Kamrup (*c.* middle of 1624), Satrajit continued to serve there under Zahid Khan.

His privileged position in Kamrup.

The departure of Mirza Nathan and the other experienced local officials from Kamrup, brought the Raja into lime-light, and, at the same time, left him free to pursue his latent ambitious designs. Taking advantage of the prevailing political and administrative confusion in Kamrup, he arrogated to himself a position of great influence and authority. Satrajit managed to secure most of the *Dakhinkol jagirs* of Mirza Nathan as well as of the other retired officials for himself,* and assumed the charge of the fortified station of Pandu, the seat of the local fleet. †

A contemporary Jesuit letter testifies to the exalted position and immense power wielded by Raja Satrajit in Kamrup, during the years 1626-27. According to Stephen Cacella, ‡ "Satrajit, Rajah of Busna was the pagan commander-in-chief of Mogor (Mughal) against the Assanes (Assamese) and lived at Pando."

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* The *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 77 says, "Most parts of *Dakhinkol* had been given to Satrajit as *tuyal*."

† The *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 80 gives a summary of Raja Satrajit's career, which, in its main outline, agrees with that derived from the *Baharistan*. But it requires correction on some material points. First, the statement that the Raja was appointed *thanahdar* of Pandu immediately after the conquest of Kamrup, though true in a sense, is not strictly accurate. According to the *Baharistan*, the appointment was only temporary, and the Raja was replaced soon after by Mir Abdur Razzak Shirazi. Satrajit's permanent posting appears to have been at Hajo, whence he went out to participate in quelling internal revolt and withstanding external attack all over the province. It is only after Mirza Nathan's departure from Kamrup that he was made the *thanahdar* of Pandu, and this time on a permanent basis. Secondly, the *Padishahnamah* mentions that Satrajit was appointed the *thanahdar* of Gauhati as well. This again is hardly true. The *Baharistan* does not refer to Gauhati even once in its long narrative, as having been included in the Mughal sphere of influence, and there is good reason to believe that it came under the Imperial sway only in Shah Jahan's time.

‡ C. Wessel's Early Jesuit travellers in Central Asia, pp. 123-25.

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"The Rajah," we are further told, "through his knowledge and position, stands very high throughout the country, as we (the travellers) noted at Azo, where the people in the streets cheered him as if he was their sovereign."

Intoxicated with his proud and privileged position and untrammelled power, Raja Satrajit defied the Bengal viceroys, gave royal airs, and attempted to perpetuate his authority by an alliance with the Ahom king. This was about the end of Jahangir's reign. *

and his alliance with the Ahom king.

The death of Emperor Jahangir (1627) closes a definite epoch in the history of Mughal north-east frontier policy, and heralds the beginning of a new one. Fifteen years had passed since the Mughals conquered Kamrup, and their primary task had hitherto been the consolidation of power by the extermination of the disaffected local chiefs and the rebellious Imperial officers. Though to a casual observer, the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol*, rebel chieftains like Sonatan, Bhaba Singh and Jadu Naik, treacherous officials like Shaikh Ibrahim *krori* and Raja Satrajit, and Raja Bali Narayan and his lieutenants, appear to have been the great enemy of the Mughal peace in Kamrup, the real foe was however not on the spot. He was the neighbouring king of Assam. But, curiously enough, the two deadly enemies had so long fought one another almost invariably behind a veil—the rebel Koches and the hill-chieftains of Kamrup, which was now torn asunder, so that they were once more drawn into the open arena.

Death of Emperor Jahangir in relation to the history of Mughal north-east frontier policy.

* The *Purani Asama Buranji* (pp. 92-93, 168-169) gives interesting details in this connection. Sick of the indecisive and protracted struggle between the Mughals and the Ahom king, Satrajit who was "in charge of the gate (of Kamrup, *i.e.*, Pandu) professed filial piety for the Ahom king and soothed him with suitable presents. He then sought his protection and patronage. The Ahom ruler accepted Satrajit with a son's favour, and bestowed valuable gifts on him and his family. His son (aged two years and a half) was reared under the king's personal care.

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A new phase in the policy of the Mughals thus sets in. The pivot round which their activity turns now, is the direct and persistent hostility with the Ahom king. Internal affairs sink to the background, and foreign relations absorb the sole attention of the Mughals. In short, the history of Kamrup really merges itself in the greater and more interesting theme of the Ahom-Mughal politics, of which it henceforward forms an inseparable part.

Opening of a new phase of policy.

Section III. Mughal Relation with Assam (1616—1627).

The defensive and conciliatory policy, born of the dismal failure in the Assam war, the operation of which with regard to Koch Bihar and Kamrup has already been discussed, was most assiduously sought to be pursued by the Mughals in case of the Ahom state. The peculiar trend of the Ahom-Mughal history of the last decade of Jahangir's reign, bears out the truth of the suggestion. Being seriously engaged in the task of consolidation of their authority in Kamrup, the Mughals were henceforward very careful not to give any offence to their powerful neighbour, the Ahom king, so as to provoke him into open hostility.

Mughal policy towards Assam peaceful and conciliatory.

But they were not left alone. Nemesis speedily overtook the Mughals, and they had to expiate for their impotent territorial greed. It was now the turn of the Ahom king, with his moral and material position greatly strengthened as a result of the last victory, to take advantage of the prevailing political confusion in Kamrup, to attempt the subversion of the Imperial authority there. The evil consequences of the Assam disaster were soon bitterly felt. Rebellions broke out, and their leaders naturally looked up to the Ahom ruler for sympathy and support.

Ahom attitude of dogged hostility pursued indirectly and informally.

The tables were turned. The Ahom monarch was determined to let slip no opportunity for jeopardising Mughal authority

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in Kamrup. He fomented insurrections himself. His Court became the asylum of all the hostile elements, and he readily responded to all appeals for men and money made by the disaffected Koch chieftains, as well as the turbulent hill-Rajas of *Dakhinkol*, in course of their frequent conflicts with the Imperial officers. In short, he pulled the leading strings from behind, and was really the most deadly enemy of the Mughals in the far-off frontier province.

But this persistent enmity had a novel strain. In spite of its unrelenting and greatly provoking nature, it was almost invariably pursued in an indirect and informal way. For more than a decade, a sort of unofficial warfare went on in which the Ahom king fought the Mughals in Kamrup, under the thin veneer of an interferer on behalf of his proteges. There was hardly any open and direct conflict between the two powers, as such. The one aim of the Ahom monarch appears to have been to bring down his foe by means of deadly darts from behind, and though he was not ultimately successful, he followed his policy with unabated zeal, till the exigencies of political circumstances cleared the way for the resumption of formal hostilities in the early thirties of the seventeenth century.

First Ahom intervention in Kamrup on behalf of a rebel Mughal officer thwarted (1617.)

The first interference of the Ahom king in the internal affairs of Kamrup, occurred in the spring of 1617, when the viceroyalty of Ibrahim Khan Fathjang had just begun in Bengal. Shaikh Ibrahim, an old revenue officer, defalcated seven *lakhs* of rupees out of the royal revenue, and was unable to make good the amount, when called upon to do so. Fear of stern punishment drove him to rebellion, and he gathered round him 3000 followers. To add to his guilt, he then entered into a treasonable correspondence with the Ahom king Pratap Singh, and begged his help. In return for his armed assistance, the wicked Shaikh agreed to co-operate with him in his inevitable conflict with the Mughal Emperor. But the shrewd Ahom monarch apparently suspected the *bonafides* of the

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rebel, and, in order to test his sincerity and earnestness as well as to gauge his real position, advised him to commence hostilities forthwith, thus preparing the ground for his intervention. If Shaikh Ibrahim were able to break the ice, he was promised adequate help in elephants, artillery, war-boats and money, besides a feudatory kingship and an Ahom princess to boot. Greatly encouraged by these high hopes, the Shaikh broke into rebellion, and instigated Sonatan Koch to attempt a surprise attack upon the Imperial outpost of Dhamdhama. A daring assault followed, and the fall of the place seemed imminent. At that juncture, the much-needed reinforcement from Hajo, arrived (in spite of the strenuous efforts made by Shaikh Ibrahim to intercept it on the way), and it saved the situation. This initial failure scared away the Ahom king, and the whole conspiracy subsequently fell through, owing to the unexpected murder of the rebel Shaikh in a scuffle with the loyalist party. *

About six months after this incident, there was another hostile move on the part of the Ahom king. Bali Narayan, the younger brother of Parikshit Narayan (the ex-king of Kamrup), who had sought shelter with the Ahom ruler after the conquest of Kamrup, and had been installed by the latter as his vassal, took advantage of the temporary withdrawal of the Mughal garrison from Pandu—the seat of the local navy, to capture it without a blow. He next desired to follow up his success by crossing over to the north bank of the Brahmaputra and attacking Hajo, the Imperial headquarters. So he appealed for help to the Ahom king. The latter at once sent a huge army under his chief officers. A gigantic attack on Hajo, by land and water, followed. After a strenuous fight, the Mughals totally defeated the Assamese host, which was compelled to retreat with great loss in men and materials.

The second and the more ambitious and well-planned hostile move in aid of Bali Narayan also proved futile (1618).

This great discomfiture had a deterrent effect on the Ahom king, and he desisted from interfering in Kamrup politics for

* *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, p. 208b.

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two years hence. But he was only biding his time, and was anxious to wipe out the stain of his defeat. He created two new posts for the more efficient administration of the western part of his realm. An Ahom viceroy, styled as the Bar Phukan, was appointed to govern the territories west of Kaliabar up to the western frontier, while another officer, named the Bar Barua, was placed in charge of the tracts east of that place, and outside the jurisdiction of the Burha and Bar Gohains.

In the autumn of 1619, the Ahom king at last found a capital opportunity to retrieve his former defeat. The hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol*, who were sick of the dogged attempts of Mirza Nathan, the Imperial *thanahdar*, at their subjugation, and were also deeply humiliated by the nasty treatment meted out to their compeers, made a bold venture to capture the strategic hill-fort of Ranihat. Their early activities having proved futile, they sought the help of the Ahom king. The latter sent a large army of 80000 men, under the command of the Hati Barua, to Ranihat. In spite of the reinforcement, the fort could not be taken by assault, owing to the bold defence of Mirza Nathan, and it was then laid siege to. The siege turned out to be a protracted one. This made the Ahom monarch impatient and angry. He sharply rebuked his commander-in-chief, and urged him to make a final attempt to overpower the Mughals. Fortune now smiled upon the Ahoms. One by one, the stockades around the Mughal fort, fell into their hands, while the path of communication and food supply was also totally cut off. Threatened with dire starvation, the Mughals one night evacuated Ranihat and retreated to *Uttarkol*, pursued hard by the Ahoms. The Imperial hold on *Dakhinkol* was for a time lost. The vanity of the Ahom king was gratified, and he also recovered his military prestige.

Third Ahom interference in Kamrup, on behalf of the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol*, crowned with grand success (September, 1619).

But the Mughals were soon to regain their lost ground. Undaunted by the last defeat, the indefatigable and indomitable Mirza Nathan gathered together a fresh army, for a

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second trial of strength with the Ahoms. He marched to *Dakhinkol* and reached Minari, in the vicinity of which he encountered Raja Bali Narayan and his lieutenant Shumarooed, with a huge Assamese army at their back. An obstinate engagement ensued, which ended in the defeat of Bali Narayan, early in January, 1620. Thanks to Mirza Nathan, the Imperial authority was re-established, in the hilly region south of the Brahmaputra, within four months of its overthrow.

Fourth and the last informal attack and its miserable failure (January, 1620).

Thus, four successive Ahom attempts at supplanting Mughal power from Kamrup, proved at the end to be fruitless. The repeated ill-success had its moral effect. The Ahom king was at last convinced of the futility of his policy, and gradually withdrew from the arena of Kamrup politics, so that no further intervention therein is heard of, till the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth century. To his great chagrin, he witnessed the gradual weeding out of the rebel elements and the slow but steady consolidation of the Imperial authority in Kamrup.

The extinction of almost all the disturbing factors, as a result of about fifteen years of continuous warfare, paved the way for a new phase in Ahom-Mughal history. There was to be no more darting of poisonous shafts in secret. The numerous Koch adventurers and the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol*—mere pawns in the political game, were now gone, and the deadly pastime must once more be played out by the two parties only. The Ahom monarch and the Mughal Emperor were again drawn into open and direct warfare, which, henceforward dragged on, with periodic intervals, till the issues were finally settled about the end of the seventeenth century.

Gradual change in Ahom-Mughal relations and the outbreak of open and direct war.

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CHAPTER VI.

MUGHAL NORTH-EAST FRONTIER POLICY IN ITS FULL BLOOM.

Section 1. Mughal Policy towards Koch Bihar * (1628-58).

The history of Mughal north-east frontier policy during the reign of Shah Jahan, is very peculiar in one sense. While peace harmony and good-will marked the Imperial relations with one of the border states *e. g.*, Koch Bihar, bitter and undisguised hostility was carried on with the sister state of Assam. The explanation of this strange phenomenon is, however, simple. The vassal state of Koch Bihar commanded the line of communications with Bengal. And the Mughals could hardly fail to realise that in the almost incessant conflict with the most powerful Mongoloid state, as Assam was, a friendly and contented Koch power was the best guarantee for the Imperial success.

Peculiarity of Mughal north-east frontier policy of the period 1628-58—bitter warfare with Assam but peace with Koch Bihar.

From the standpoint of Koch Bihar as well, there was nothing to disturb the peaceful and amicable relation which had been established during the last decade of Jahangir's reign, so that, throughout the greater part of the new regime, this state of affairs continued uninterruptedly. It was only when

* In a review of the history of Koch Bihar, in relation to the Mughals, during the reign of Shah Jahan, one is confronted by a great paucity of material. The standard Persian work of the period—the *Padishahnamah* of Abdul Hamid Lahori, is practically silent here, and the other contemporary chronicles (the *Padishahnamah* of Muhammad Waris, the *Shah Jahan-namah* and the *Amal-i-Salih*) follow suit. Stray references in the *Buranjis* as well as in the native Koch chronicles, are all we have to build on.

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the War of Succession broke out that the genesis of a new stage in the Koch-Mughal politics was laid.

Bir Narayan—the first Koch king of this epoch. (1627-32 A. D.).

Bir Narayan, son of Lakshmi Narayan, succeeded to the Koch throne, early in 1627. Though he had served a long period of apprenticeship in the art of government, during the latter period of his father's reign, he proved himself to be an incompetent ruler, grossly sensuous in character. * It is easy to infer that he continued in the state of vassalage, paying regular tributes to the Mughal Emperor, The contemporary Bengal viceroy, Qasim Khan, was an energetic and able man, and Bir Narayan dared not turn away from the path of faithful obedience even if he had desired it.

Followed by his son Pran Narayan (1633-1666 A. D.).

After a short and inglorious reign, Bir Narayan died and was succeeded by his son, Pran Narayan, who came to the throne in 1633 A. D., † and ruled for a period of about 33 years.

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* *Cf. Rajopakhyan*, pp. 48-50. No coins of this king have as yet been found. The Mughal historians do not refer to him at all.

† The prevailing confusion with regard to the period of accession of Pran Narayan to the throne, is the cumulative effect of the misconception current, regarding the end of Lakshmi Narayan's rule. In W. Hunter's Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. X. p. 409, and in the Catalogue of Coins, Shillong Provincial Coin Cabinet, p. 201, and also in Gait's History of Assam, first edition, p. 359, 1627 A. D. is the date given of Pran Narayan's accession. Apart from the testimony of the *Baharistan* and the contemporary Jesuit account which enables me to reject this date as being too early, the unerring evidence of Pran Narayan's coinage pushes forward the beginning of his reign to 1633 A. D. Of the three full coins of Pran Narayan in the British Museum, the date of the first two is clearly 1555 *Saka* (1633 A. D.). Though the date of the third coin is not easily decipherable, a personal inspection of the coin-plate leads me to suggest that the three similar consecutive numerals after 1, are 5, and not 6, so that the date is really 1555 *Saka*. Of the half-coins, the date of the only coin so far gathered, has tentatively been read by the author of the Catalogue of Coins, Shillong Provincial Coin Cabinet, as 1551 *Saka*. In the coin-plate, the last three numerals, though more or less all blurred, appear to be identical, so that if the second and the third

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The long reign of Pran Narayan is memorable in the annals of Koch Bihar State, for more reasons than one. Thanks to the ambition, energy, and tact of its king, Koch Bihar shook off foreign yoke, and, for nearly seven years, enjoyed again its long-lost independence. In internal affairs too, Pran Narayan's rule inaugurated an era of great prosperity and happiness.

Importance of his reign in Koch Bihar history.

But it was the beginning of the end. Pran Narayan was the last great Koch king—a worthy successor of Nara Narayan. During his last days, Koch Bihar again relapsed into vassalage, and, after his death, a series of weaklings appeared, under whom it slowly met with its doom.

The character of Pran Narayan has come in for a good deal of criticism and contradictory remarks. The Mughal historians portray him as a plain, simple, methodical, powerful and efficient ruler, but fond of wine and women, and dependent on his *vizier* for governmental affairs. * Obviously on the basis of the paradoxical Persian accounts, Messers. Blochmann and Sarkar have stigmatised him as an "indolent voluptuary". The Koch chronicles, on the other hand, bestow unqualified encomiums on him, as one deeply religious, an unrivalled scholar, expert in music and dancing, a great builder of temples, roads and bridges—in short, a good and a great ruler, capable and industrious, under whom there was all-round peace, prosperity, and happiness. †

Character of the new king.

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numerals be read as 5, it would be not unreasonable to read the fourth also as 5, thereby making the date 1555 *Saka*.

Thus I may point out that the date (probable as well as certain) of all the coins extant of king Pran Narayan, is 1555 *Saka* (1633 A. D.). Keeping in in view the traditional custom of the Koch kings to issue coins only to signalise the accession of a new king, I have no hesitation in affirming that 1633 A. D. is the first regnal year of Pran Narayan. It is curious to find that Gait (History of Assam, second edition, p. 365) has, without assigning any reason, also suggested the date advocated by me.

* *Alamgirnamah* p. 692 : *Fathiyah* (in J A S B 1872, p. 66).

† *Rajopakhyan* p. 51 : Koch Bihar History (in Bengali) by the late Bhagabati Charan Banerjee, pp. 96-97.

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After making a considerable allowance for the fulsome eulogium of the native historians, it may be pointed out that Pran Narayan was undoubtedly made of a better stuff than his father or his grandfather. He was very popular. From the part which he played in the warfare with the Mughals as well as the Assamese, he appears to have been also a man of daring initiative, great energy and ambition, and well-versed in governmental policy, and not an "indolent voluptuary" altogether. He personally led his army in battle, and really took the aggressive against the Mughals. Though he failed to meet them in open engagement, he, by his discreet inactivity and cautious diplomacy, gained his case at the end quite well.

His early relations with the Mughals.

Very little is known about the early relations of Pran Narayan with the Mughals. He must have been busy setting right the serious troubles which his weak father had bequeathed to him, and so was in no mood to deviate from the path of traditional loyalty. The Mughals in Bengal too, were then fully preoccupied with their own problems. Hardly had the Europeans in Hughly been put down, the Imperial authority in Kamrup was seriously challenged by the wily Raja Bali Narayan of Darrang, aided by the Assam king. Islam Khan, the then viceroy of Bengal, eager to husband all his resources to meet the enemy in the north-east frontier, could ill afford to give any cause of offence to the powerful Koch vassal. Peace, amity, and good-will, therefore, were the key-note of the Koch Mughal history during this time.

Pran Narayan readily responded to the appeal of Islam Khan to help him in his campaign against Bali Narayan and the Assamese (1636—38). He joined the Imperial army with a detachment of his own troops. In the protracted struggle that ensued, the Mughals had a chequered career. At first they suffered a series of reverses ; their commander was captured, and the fortified *thanahs*, including Hajo, fell into the hands of the enemy. With the arrival of reinforcement from the Bengal *subahdar*, they slowly recovered their lost ground. To

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make their success complete, they now pushed into the heart of the Assam realm. The tide of fortune soon rolled back; the Assamese gradually got the better of the invaders again, and at last thoroughly routed them at the battle of Duimanisila. The vanquished were then compelled to retreat down the Brahmaputra. Pran Narayan took part in the decisive engagement,* and shared in the general flight that followed it. †

The long-drawn warfare, however, soon drew to a close, and for about twenty years to come, there was no open conflict between the Mughals and the Assamese. Pran Narayan probably utilised the interval in building activities and his variegated cultural pursuits. He continued in his path of loyalty and faithfulness till the War of Succession, which, following the illness of Shah Jahan, topsyturvied the Imperial politics and paved the way for a new phase in Koch-Mughal history.

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* *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 113.

† It is curious to note that the *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, p. 212, and Stewart's History of Bengal, p. 156, mention an invasion of Koch Bihar as an episode in the Assam campaign of Islam Khan. It seems hardly probable. The earlier Persian works, contemporary as well as non-contemporary, *e. g.*, the *Padishahnamah*, the *Alamgirnamah*, and the *Masir-i-Alamgiri*, on which the the *Riyaz* and Stewart's book are mainly based, and the Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis* as well as the Koch chronicles, are all silent about it. Ghulam Husain and Stewart wrote their books long after the events they recorded had taken place, and their accounts are naturally vague, confused and rather contradictory. The motive for such a Koch-Mughal conflict seems to be wanting on either side. Pran Narayan was busy setting his house in order, and the Bengal viceroy, threatened with dire hostility by the Assam king, must have been anxious to avoid giving the powerful Koch vassal any cause of offence. An invasion of Koch Bihar is entirely out of place at this juncture. The sending of a small detachment of Mughal troops by Islam Khan, under Mir Hussain, to Koch Bihar, in course of his Assam campaign, in order to demand the customary tribute (*vide Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 75), has, obviously, been magnified by Ghulam Husain and Stewart into a full-fledged hostile expedition.

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Section II. Mughal Policy towards Assam (1628—58).*

(A) Ahom-Mughal History (1628—1639).

Emperor Shah Jahan's reign marks a new epoch in Ahom-Mughal politics.

The reign of Emperor Shah Jahan which covered about one third of a century, marked the beginning of the third and the longest phase in the Ahom-Mughal politics. A period of informal hostility had culminated in a sharp but short passage of arms, the decisively unfavourable result of which led to a change in Mughal tactics, so that there was soon a reversion to the *status quo ante bellum*. But the exigency of circumstances cut short this stage, and paved the way for the resumption of open conflict between the two powers, which continued (with a few intermissions) till the main issues were fought out by the eighties of the seventeenth century.

* The most striking feature in connection with a survey of the original authorities, regarding the history of Kamrup in its relation to Assam, subsequent to the reign of Emperor Jahangir, is the absence of any detailed and continuous contemporary Persian work such as the *Baharistan*. The Mughal historians at the Court of Shah Jahan, have, no doubt, left accounts of the warfare in Assam, but they are few and far between. The first contemporary Persian author is Abdul Hamid Lahori. With the exception of a casual remark with regard to the *paiks* in Kamrup, during Qasim Khan's viceroyalty in Bengal, Assam affairs are mentioned by him only once, and that too, for 3 years, beginning with the ninth regnal year of Shah Jahan. This leaves us in darkness with regard to Ahom-Mughal history for the greater part of his reign. The other contemporary Persian works *e. g.*, the *Padishahnamah* of Muhammad Waris, the *Shah Jahan-namah* of Inayet Khan, the *Aml-i-Salih* by Mahammad Salih Kambu, maintain complete silence on this theme.

Of the non-contemporary Persian works, the *Alamgirnamah* has a stray reference to Islam Khan's Assam campaign. The *Masir-ul-umara*, a biographical dictionary of the Peerage of the Mughal Empire, though a mid-eighteenth century compilation, is of some help to us, in so far as it gives additional pieces of information regarding some of the heroes of the Assamese warfare of this time, like Islam Khan. The *Riyaz-us Salatin* of Ghulam Husain (compiled between 1786-88), "the fullest account in Persian of the Muhammadan History of Bengal," has only a single reference to Ahom-Mughal politics (*i. e.*, Islam Khan's Assam compaign of 1636-1638).

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The inevitable conflict did not, however, break out till nearly a decade had passed since the accession of Shah Jahan to power.

The new era, however, opens with the ninth regnal year of the Emperor.

The history of Kamrup during this period is really obscure. Zahid Khan, who continued to be the *faujdar* (governor) till the end of Jahangir's rule, appears to have been replaced at the beginning of the new reign, by Abdu-s salam, brother of Mukarram Khan, who had seen service in Kamrup at the time of its conquest. In Bengal, the contemporary viceroys were Qasim Khan (1628-32) and Azam Khan (1632-35). The former's preoccupations with "Feringhi" affairs in Hughli, and the latter's incompetence, precluded the possibility of official intervention in Kamrup, and allowed things to drift in their own way till the succession of Islam Khan.

Kamrup history of this dark period centres round the treacherous and diabolical activities of Raja Satrajit, the *thanahdar* of Pandu, and the most prominent local official next to the *faujdar*. Energetic, crafty and ambitious, he had, as I have already remarked, taken advantage of the political confusion in Kamrup, consequent on Shah Jahan's rebellion and appearance in Bengal, to increase his power and influence. Anxious to consolidate his authority even at the cost of his loyalty to the Mughal Emperor, he had already entered into a secret friendship with

History of Mughal Kamrup during the interval (1627-35) turns round the pivot of Raja Satrajit's mischievous career.

By far the most exhaustive and continuous history of the Ahom-Mughal relation, during the period under review, is given in the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Purani Asama Buranji*, both compiled about the closing years of the 17th century. Of special interest and value are the series of diplomatic letters (appended to the latter work), which were exchanged between the Kamrup governor and "the chief secretary" of the Ahom king, following the treaty of peace of 1639. They throw a flood of light upon the darkest corner in Ahom-Mughal history, and enable us to get a glimpse of the political and commercial intercourse between the two parties, during the last two decades of Shah Jahan's reign. The modern Assamese *Buranjis*, written by Kashinath Phukan, Gunabhiram Barua and others, make but slight reference to this important topic.

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the Assam king, and had ingratiated himself into his favour by professions of filial piety.* Though already on the path of treachery by his alliance with the greatest enemy of the Mughals, the wily Raja kept up an appearance of fidelity to the Imperialist cause by continuing in service. His real aim seems to have been to play off one side against the other, and profit from their mutual dissensions. He was undone if the quarrel was made up. Anxious to prevent such a contingency, he entered into a secret pact with the Bar Phukan (the governor of the Assamese territories west of Kaliabar). The two together soon succeeded in frustrating a serious attempt at peace made by Qasim Khan. Deeply engrossed in the task of chastising the Christian merchants of Hughli, the Bengal viceroy must have been anxious to ensure the peace of the north-east frontier by establishing amicable relations with the Ahom king. So he eagerly accepted the offer of an Assamese trader to act as a mediator, and sent an envoy in his company, with suitable presents, to the Ahom capital.

The Raja foils a peace-move in collusion with the Bar Phukan.

Alarmed at the prospect of a friendly alliance between the two sides, the wicked Raja, a traitor by nature, urged upon the Bar Phukan the necessity of nipping it in the bud. The latter took the hint and poisoned the ears of his sovereign against the Assamese trader, by falsely representing that the latter had not only communicated valuable information to the Mughals, but had further been presumptuous enough to carry on, on his own initiative and without the king's authority, peaceful overtures with them. The Assam king, relying on the words of his official, ordered the trader with two of his party to be killed, and also refused to receive the Mughal envoy, who had to return baffled.† Thus, for a moment, the duplicity of the Raja was crowned with success, and the peace negotiations between the Mughals and the Assam king broke down. But retribution was near at hand. A nephew of the deceased

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 32.

† *Ibid.* pp. 96-97 ; Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam.

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trader afterwards divulged the sinister conspiracy (between the Bar Phukan and Raja Satrajit) to the Assam king, and convinced him of the innocence and sincere purpose of his uncle. The diabolical nature of Raja Satrajit was thus revealed, and the Ahom ruler now bided his time to punish him as well as his compeer, the Bar Phukan.

The deception practised by Satrajit, added fuels to the fire of the Ahom king's displeasure, already lighted by the treachery, committed in connection with one of his vassals, Mamu Govinda, the chief of Beltala. True to his allegiance, Mamu Govinda had fought in the interests of his suzerain against the Mughals, in the early years of their occupation of Kamrup, but was afterwards captured by Mirza Nathan, the *thanahdar* of *Dakhinkol*, along with Shumarooed Kayeth, the able lieutenant of Bali Narayan. He appears to have regained his personal freedom as well as his domain not long after, and was received back into the favour of the Assam king. He then began to play the same treacherous and diabolical game as Raja Satrajit did, and, by selling the secrets of one side to the other, kept up an appearance of friendship with both. But as luck would have it, his prototype, Satrajit, bore a grudge against him as the slayer of his nephew. So he took the earliest opportunity to expose his double-dealing, and promised to hand Mamu Govinda over to the Ahom king for punishment. A simultaneous attack upon Mamu Govinda was made by the Assamese from the east, and by Satrajit from the west. The latter succeeded in capturing his foe, but instead of sending him to the Assam king as promised, he connived at his escape to the place of the Bengal *subahdar* at Jahangirnagar, in order to placate the Kamrup *faujdar*, Abdu-s salam. *

And plays the Assam king false with regard to the capture of one of his disloyal vassals—Mamu Govinda of Beltala.

Greatly enraged at the persistent duplicity on the part of Raja Satrajit, the Assam king now ordered the Bar Phukan to capture him by any means, fair or foul. The latter accordingly

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 94-95.

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arranged for a friendly interview with the Raja, on the sands of Umananda, to the north of the modern Gauhati. Satrajit reached there with 60 *bachari* boats from Sualkochi. Instead of utilising this capital opportunity for arresting the unsuspecting traitor, the Bar Phukan, on account of the mutual friendship and sympathy, allowed him to go back unscathed, after friendly greetings and exchange of presents had been over. Dissatisfied with the Bar Phukan for his negligence and faithlessness, the Assam king starved him to death. *

Attempt of the Assam king to imprison Raja Satrajit fails.

Though Satrajit escaped from the vengeance of the Assam king, he, by his treacherous nature, forfeited for ever the latter's sympathy and support. The curtain fell, and one important scene in the tragic drama of his life ended. Deaf to the voice of prudence and morality, Satrajit still clung to his crafty ways, and was instrumental in bringing about the first protracted conflict between the Mughals and the Assamese, during the latter part of Azam Khan's viceroyalty in Bengal.

Later on, Satrajit takes a prominent part in originating Ahom-Mughal warfare (1636-38).

The warfare which broke out early in 1636, symbolised the beginning of the new phase in Ahom-Mughal politics—a phase of undisguised hostility between the two powers, on account of their political and commercial rivalry and jealousy, which long outlived the reign of Shah Jahan.

Authorities differ with regard to the circumstances which led to the struggle. According to the *Padishahnamah*, two-fold factors, both political, appear to have been responsible for it. The first was the asylum given by the Assam king, Pratap Singh, to Santosh Lashkar and Jairam Lashkar, the chiefs of the *paiks* in Mughal Kamrup, who had sought his protection, being sick of the ill-treatment received at the hands of Qasim Khan, the

Origins of the conflict—political issues.

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 95-97 : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

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first Bengal viceroy in Shah Jahan's reign. * The shelter afforded by the Assam king to the two recalcitrant Mughal subjects, was a great offence which called for redress. The second and the immediate factor which precipitated the crisis, was the wickedness and treachery of Satrajit, the *thanahdar* of Pandu, who made common cause with Bali Narayan, and instigated him to profit by the change of governors in Bengal and attack Kamrup.

Dominated by trade and commercial jealousy of the Mughals.

But the real origin of the war is to be sought not so much in the political complications of the period which certainly had their sway, as in the trade and commercial jealousy and rivalry of the two sides, particularly the Mughals. † The author of the *Padishahnamah*, the historian of Mir Jumla's Assam campaign, as well as the writer of the *Purani Asama Buranji*, all testify to the abundance of wild elephants and lignum-aloes in the hills of Assam and gold in the sands of the Brahmaputra. The Mughals in Kamrup must

* *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 72. We are told by the author that about 10 to 12000 of these *paiks* had been sent by the Bengal government to Kamrup, where they were given *jagirs* for keeping up *khedahs* (enclosures for catching wild elephants). But as these men had been remiss in forwarding elephants, their leaders were summoned to the capital and placed in confinement by Qasim Khan. Though they were at last let off on a huge ransom, the humiliation they had suffered at the hands of the *subahdar*, led them to seek retribution by passing over to the side of the Assam king.

† *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 169-70. In course of an interesting anecdote, the author brings out clearly the part which the trade jealousy of the Mughals played in originating the war. We are told that sometime after the failure of the Assam king's attempt to capture Satrajit, his chief officers sent a messenger from Samdhara, to enquire why the "Bangals" (Mughals) were on the war-path. The latter replied that unless the Ahoms would agree to give them facilities in securing elephants, *agar* (aloes-wood), gold and pepper from their realm, they would persist in their hostile move. Alarmed at the idea of a foreign invasion, and anxious to gain time to make preparations to meet it, the Bar Barua had recourse to a trick. He sent an envoy to the Mughals, requesting them to postpone their hostile activities for a month and a half, so as to secure in the interval, a favourable response to their demands from the Assam king, who lived far off at his capital. Though the real intention of the Assamese officer was soon after revealed to the Mughals, by a runaway boatman of his side,

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have looked with tempting eyes upon the rich zoological and geological resources of Assam, and burnt with a desire to have a share in them. Trade and commercial cupidity of the Mughals, more than their political rivalry and ill-will, is the key-note to their repeated conflicts with the Assamese. It had involved them in their first passage of arms in Assam at the end of 1615, and, it again goaded them on to a fresh warfare after the lapse of about two decades. In so far as the mercantile interests were concerned, the Mughals were not really the innocent and injured party as the *Padishah-namah* depicts them. They were inspired by an ambition to participate in the natural wealth of Assam, even at the risk incurring the enmity of its king.

The *casus belli*— Assam king's provocative actions.

Yet the *casus belli* was the arrogant and haughty attitude of the Assam king, and his flagrant and persistent breach of the ordinary canons of inter-state relations and diplomacy. The wife and a child of Mamu Govinda, the protege of the Mughals, were seized and carried off to Jakhali, under orders of the Assam king, by way of reprisal. A few of the Mughal subjects (in Kamrup) were at the same time put to death by some Assamese. When redress was sought, the Assam king pleaded ignorance, and refused to redeem the legitimate grievances of the Mughals. The latter were exasperated still further by the ready asylum given to a defaulting Hindu revenue officer of Kamrup in the Assam state, and the refusal of its king to hand him over to the local Imperial authorities for punishment. A watch-dog from the Mughal camp strayed into the Assamese domain, and was not let loose by the frontier officials. *

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the plan succeeded. The respite was granted, and he utilised it in raising fortifications and completing otherwise his war-preparations. When the stipulated period elapsed, he gave a bold reply to the peremptory demands of the Mughals, and refused point-blank to make the slightest trade-concession in their favour. The flame of war soon blazed forth, and a great deal of fighting ensued.

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 97-98.

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The series of provocations thus offered by the Assamese, strained the feelings of the Mughals almost to the breaking point. When, at the top of these, came the aggressive invasion of Kamrup by Bali Narayan, the cup of iniquity was full to the brim, and the Mughals were compelled to launch into warfare forthwith.

First phase of the war (March-December, 1636).

The first phase of the war begins with Raja Bali Narayan's attack on *Uttarkol*, in the month of March, 1636. Crossing the Bar Nadi river, he reached Pathalikuchi, * and moving further to the south-west, captured the Imperialist stronghold of Nowmati. †

Abdu-s salam, the governor of Kamrup, with the small contingent at his disposal at Hajo, could not render any help to the garrison at Nowmati, and appealed to the new Bengal viceroy, Islam Khan, for reinforcement. His naval resources being comparatively better, a fleet of 40 war-boats was sent by Abdu-s salam up the river Brahmaputra, into the heart of the Assam domain, to effect the capture of the fugitive defaulting officer, Harikesh. But the enterprise failed, and the expeditionary force returned discomfited. ‡

The Assam king, Pratap Singh, now determined to make an earnest attempt at ousting the Mughals from Kamrup, by overpowering the small local garrisons before reinforcements would arrive. With this end in view, he bought off some of the leading hill-chiefs of the *Dakhinkol* frontier *e. g.*, Dimarua Raja, Bar Duar Raja and Bamun Raja, with suitable presents, and, with their connivance, attacked the Mughal *thanahs* there. One by one, the fortified posts of Jakhali, § Bantikoth, ‖

Assamese success in *Dakhinkol*.

* "Pathaleekoochi" is about 10 miles away from the right bank of the Bar Nadi river (*vide* Kamrup District Map).

† *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*. "Nowmatti" is about 10 miles south-west of Pathaleekoochi.

‡ *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 98 : Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam.

§ "Jakhli" is in Habraghat *mauza*, Dt. Goalpara.

‖ Unidentified.

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Dirmiha, * Chomooreea † and Nagarberra ‡ fell into the hands of the Assamese commander, Hari Deka. Unable to make a stand anywhere, the Mughals crossed the river Brahmaputra into *Uttarkol*, leaving considerable spoils in the hands of the enemy. The victorious Assamese host then encamped at Paringa, § on the bank of the Koolsi river, and thence returned triumphantly to their frontier fort at Kajali. ‖

In *Uttarkol* as well, the Mughals failed to check the progress of the Ahoms, commanded by Bali Narayan. After the conquest of the fort of Nowmati, reconnoitring parties were sent to find out a convenient route, along which to march upon Hajo to the south. ¶ When they had returned, the Assamese army, 14000 strong, moved from Nowmati and encamped at Shonda, $ *en route* to Hajo.

And in *Uttarkol* (March to April, 1636).

The imminent attack on the capital of Kamrup, stirred Abdu-s salam and his men to feverish activity and an attempt was made to anticipate it, by marching northwards and falling upon the Assamese fortified camp. A desperate encounter took place at Shonda, in which the Mughals were defeated with the loss of some of their commanders, along with many horses guns, swords and other war-materials, ₩ and they then fell back upon Hajo.

Battle of Shonda results in Mughal defeat.

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* "Duramari" (?) is on the left bank of the Brahmaputra, about nine miles to the north of Chomooreea, Dt. Kamrup.

† "Chamooreea" stands on the bank of the Singra river, about eleven miles south-east of Nagarberra, Dt. Kamrup.

‡ "Nagarbera" is on the left bank of the Brahmaputra, to the south of its confluence with the Koolsi river.

§ "Potrorunga" is about a mile and a half south of Chomooreea.

‖ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Purani Asama Buranji*, (pp. 98-99) : Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam.

¶ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

$ Shonda is about 12 miles to the north of Hajo, Dt. Kamrup.

₩ *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 99-100 : The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* refers to the battle of Shonda, after the conquest of Hajo.

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The victorious Assamese then laid siege to Hajo. A fierce struggle by land and water ensued in the vicinity of the Mughal fort. Though defeated in a series of encounters, in one of which they lost 360 guns and their battle-drum, the Mughals tenaciously held on to their stronghold.*

Siege of Hajo by the Assamese fails.

The repeated discomfiture of the Imperialists encouraged the Assamese generals who had returned to Kajali, to renew hostilities both in *Uttarkol* and *Dakhinkol* regions. They moved from their headquarters in two divisions, the first one crossed the Brahmaputra and attacked the Mughal stronghold of Srighat,† and captured it with little difficulty,‡ while the second fell upon Pandu (the seat of the Imperial fleet, in charge of Raja Satrajit), "which lay opposite to Srighat on the left bank of the Brahmaputra." §

Srighat captured by them.

Meanwhile, in response to the appeal for help made by Abdu-s salam, Islam Khan sent from Jahangirnagar a strong army, consisting of 1000 cavalry and 1000 matchlockmen, under the charge of some noted Imperial officers *e. g.*, Shaikh Muhiu-d din, brother of Abdu-s salam, Muhammad Salih Kambu and Sayyid Zainul-Abidin, together with more than 200 war-boats,

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* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

† "Shoriaghata," on the bank of the Bar Nadi river, at present about 10 miles to the north of Gauhati, is famous as the scene of many battles between the Mughals and the Assamese. In olden times, it was about 2 miles to the north of Gauhati, which then occupied mainly the north bank of the Brahmaputra.

‡ The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* refers to peace negotiations having been successfully carried on at this stage between the two sides, through Raja Satrajit, as a result of which, there was a cessation of hostilities for some time. In the midst of the protracted struggle which had been going on, such abrupt peace proposals, on the face of them, appear to be improbable. Moreover, the silence of the *Padishahnamah* and the *Purani Asama Buranji* on this point, makes me sceptical in accepting the version of the *Ahom Buranji* as true.

§ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai : Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 100.

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and adequate war-materials. But as the rains were at their height and the current in the river Brahmaputra strong, the bigger war-boats and the heavy transport vessels could not proceed further than Ghoraghat, and halted there to await the end of the season. Only a small detachment, in light *kosahs*, under Muhammad Salih, reached Hajo, and thence moved to the succour of Raja Satrajit at Pandu.

Arrival of reinforcement for the Mughals delayed owing to rains and the strong current of the river Brahmaputra.

The wicked Raja, whose loyalty sat lightly upon him, detained Muhammad Salih half-way, and treacherously handed over Pandu to the enemy. Feigning defeat, he then retired with his ships to Hajo, * while the Assamese advanced further and halted at Agiathuti, on the sands of the Brahmaputra, † and made two fortified posts there.

Pandu treacherously surrendered by Raja Satrajit to the Assamese (*c.* end of April, 1636).

At the end of the rains (*c.* October, 1636), the rest of the reinforcing army arrived from Ghoraghat. The Mughals now made a vigorous attempt to check the triumphant career of the Assamese. Hajo and the fortified posts around it, were strongly garrisoned, while the reinforced fleet proceeded to Srighat to oppose further progress of the enemy.

Informed about the strengthening of the Imperialist ranks, the Assamese left their newly-made fortified posts at Agiathuti, and faced the Mughals, two *kos* west of Pandu. ‡ In the naval fight that ensued, the former were defeated, with the loss of a few of their guns, and their commander, the son of the Bar Phukan, was shot dead, while trying to rally the men for a fresh encounter. §

After the rains, the reinforced Mughals got the better of their enemy, and recovered fort Srighat (Oct. 1636).

This victory encouraged the Mughals to proceed further and occupy Agiathuti, destroying the Assamese fortified posts

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* *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 73. † *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 100.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Ibid* : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 101.

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there. * Unable to make a stand, the Assamese crossed the Brahmaputra, and fell back upon their stronghold at Srighat, which the energetic Mughal commandant Zainul-Abidin soon laid siege to. At first he was repelled and had to retire to a stockade in the hill near by, but he renewed the attack three days later, being reinforced by 20 war-ships. The Assamese army and the navy offered a stubborn defence, but ammunition having run short, these were forced to retreat, evacuating Srighat, and leaving 10 war-ships and 4 transports behind. †

Apprised of these reverses, the Assam king sent strong and speedy reinforcement, by land and water, which raised the drooping spirit of his men, and encouraged them to a fresh trial of strength with the Mughals. The fortifications at Pandu were strengthened, and the Assamese fleet once more appeared in the vicinity of Srighat, anxious to attack the Mughals stationed there under Zainul-Abidin. ‡

The Assam king sends reinforcement.

Meanwhile the Mughals were not idle. Encouraged by the apparent turn in the tide of fortune and responsive to the appeal for fresh help, Islam Khan, the Bengal *subahdar*, collected further reinforcement, consisting of 1500 cavalry, 4000 matchlockmen and archers, and sent it to Hajo, under a few of his trusty officers, including his own brother, Mir Zainu-d din, and Allah Yar Khan, together with large stores of ammunition, weapons and money. To obviate the difficulty, with regard to food supply to the garrisons at Hajo and Srighat, caused by the desertion of the *paiks* to the side of the enemy, Islam Khan at the same time sent Masum Khan (grand-son of Isa Khan Afghan, and an obedient vassal) with 65 war-boats, laden with grains.

Additional help in men and materials sent by the Bengal *subahdar*.

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II, p. 73.

† *Ibid* : *Ibid*: *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 101.

‡ *Ibid* : *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 102.

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Muhammad Zaman and Khwaja Sher, the *faujdars* of Sylhet, and of Ghoraghat and Gilah respectively, along with Pashupati, a vassal in Kamrup, were also ordered to co-operate with the Hajo army. The long river journey from Jahangirnagar was slow and tedious, and before the reinforcement could reach Hajo, the Mughals had suffered a series of reverses, and lost their ground in Kamrup. *

An untoward natural phenomenon soon took place, which greatly affected the course of the struggle. The branch of the Brahmaputra which flowed by Hajo (the headquarters), receded two or three *kos* away from it, rendering co-operation between the garrison and the fleet impossible in case of an attack. This led the feeble-hearted governor, Abdu-s salam, to hasten to Srighat and induce the energetic officer, Sayyid Zainul-Abidin, to accompany him to Hajo, with his own men. Pressed hard by Abdu-s salam, the Sayyid left Srighat, placing the fleet in charge of three officers—Muhammad Salih Kambu, Raja Satrajit and Majlis Bayazid.

Recall of Sayyid Zainul-Abidin from Srighat to Hajo by Abdu-s salam.

The recall of Zainul-Abidin from Srighat, was a serious tactical blunder for the Mughals, which turned the tide of fortune against them. To add to their troubles, Satrajit now informed the Assamese about the sudden change of affairs, and exhorted them to profit by it. The Assamese commanders, ever on the look-out to strike the Mughals, took advantage of the sudden depletion in their ranks to make a vigorous night-attack on the fleet stationed at Srighat, with 500 ships of their own. The Mughals were taken by surprise. To add to their discomfiture, Satrajit, a hardened traitor, once again played them false, and retired with his ships to Sualkochi as soon as the attack began. The result was a severe defeat. Muhammad Salih was killed, and Bayazid captured, while a large number of Mughal warships, including 7 *ghrabs* and 30

Resulted in the disastrous naval defeat of the Mughals at Srighat. (*c.* beginning of November, 1636.)

* *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. pp. 74-75.

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bachharis, and a great quantity of war-implements (100 big guns, 300 swords and 100 spears) fell into the hands of the Assamese. * The defeated Mughals, with the few ships that escaped capture, then fled to Sualkochi in hot haste to join Raja Satrajit, while the victorious Assamese recovered their fortifications at Agiathuti and halted there.

The news of the brilliant naval success attained at Srighat, emboldened the Assam king to adopt more energetic and ambitious measures, in order to expel the Mughals from Kamrup altogether. He sent a contingent of 10000 archers and matchlockmen and 60 large ships to join his main army in a vigorous attack upon the stronghold at Sualkochi. † A combined attack by land and water followed. The Mughals failed to make a stand there. A great many of them were killed, while a large number of their war-ships as well as transport vessels were lost. The survivors, including Raja Satrajit, with the remaining ships, retreated down the Brahmaputra, hotly chased by the Assamese. The latter pursued the vanquished as far as Chandankotha, and then returned to Sualkochi, with a large quantity of spoils, including 300 ships, 300 large and small guns, 200 hand-grenades, besides silver and gold. ‡ Raja Satrajit with his ships moved to Dhubri, where he managed to detain some vessels, full of provisions, which were bound for Hajo. §

Fort Sualkochi surrendered by the Mughals, with heavy loss, and their navy withdrew to Dhubri.

The next move of the Assam king was an attempt upon Hajo itself. The Bar Phukan and Bali Narayan, with the Assamese and Koch troops, left Srighat and Pandu and advanced towards Hajo, under the cover of a series of stockades. It was then

* *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 76 : *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 102-103 : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

† It stands on the right bank of the Brahmaputra, westward of Pandu, on the opposite bank.

‡ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : Wade's MS. History of Assam. The *Purani Asama Buranji* and the *Padishahnamah* are silent on the point.

§ *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 76.

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closely besieged, and all paths of supplies thereto were cut off. The garrison under Abdu-s salam, assisted by Shaikh Muhiud-din and Sayyid Zainul-Abidin, offered a desperate defence, and had recourse to several sallies. But these were fruitless, and in one of them the Mughal commander was wounded. Provisions soon ran short. For a time the men subsisted on their pack-camels and bullocks. At last when these were exhausted, Abdu-s salam, with all his colleagues (excepting Sayyid Zainul-Abidin) and the soldiery, surrendered, and was immediately imprisoned and sent to the Ahom capital. Preferring death to dishonour, the gallant Sayyid, with the small band of his followers, made a desperate attempt to force his way through the enemy ranks, and was slain.

Siege of Hajo by the Assam king, followed by its surrender (*c.* end of November, 1636).

An enormous booty was captured at Hajo, including 2000 small and large guns, about 5000 swords and 700 horses, besides a great number of pearls and jewelled ornaments. The brick-buildings in the Mughal capital were then all levelled with the ground.*

Immense booty gained by the Assamese.

The capture of Hajo was the crowning achievement of the Assamese. Want of provisions, delay in the arrival of reinforcements, and, above all, the overwhelming numerical strength of the besiegers, all combined to bring about its fall, which was followed by the speedy disruption of Mughal power in Kamrup, both on the north as well as the south bank of the Brahmaputra.

In *Dakhinkol*, the Imperial authority had already been undermined by the loss of the *thanahs* of Jakhali, Bantikoth, Chomooreea, Nagarberra, Paringa and Pandu, early in 1636. To consolidate his power, the Assam king had offered asylum to

Mughal losses in *Dakhinkol*.

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam ; *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 77 : *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 103-104. With regard to the spoils secured at Hajo, I have followed the account of the *Ahom Buranji* ; the *Purani Asama Buranji* gives a much smaller amount.

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Chandra Narayan,* son of Parikshit Narayan, and had installed him as a vassal in *Dakhinkol*.

Chandra Narayan, a protege of the Ahom king, occupied Kari Bary.

Chandra Narayan at first lived in *parganah* Solmari. When the people of *parganah* Kari Bary, sick of the oppression of the local *thanahdar*, rose in rebellion and appealed to Chandra Narayan to come to the rescue, the energetic and ambitious Koch prince at once responded, and, with six to seven thousand Assamese and Koches, easily occupied the whole Kari Bary region, and then established a strong fortified camp at Hatsilah.† Thus the whole of *Dakhinkol*, from Kari Bary in the extreme south-west to Pandu in the south-east, gradually slipped away from the hands of the Mughals.

Mughal outposts surrounding Hajo, in *Uttarkol*, occupied by the Assamese.

In *Uttarkol* as well, they fared no better. Their main strongholds of Srighat and Hajo were already lost, and the Assamese next exerted themselves to expel the garrisons from the surrounding fortified posts as well. An obstinate struggle now ensued. But the Mughals played a losing game. After a vain attempt to make a stand at Madhupur,‡ they evacuated it and marched eastwards, just to try their luck by attacking the Ahom outpost of Shonda.§ Driven thence, they fell back upon the *thanah* of Burpetha.‖

Uttama Narayan, zamindar of Barnagar and a faithful vassal of the Mughals, was the next object of attack of the Assamese.

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* He was a veritable weather-cock in Kamrup politics. He at first joined the Mughals and was given *jagirs* by them in Kari Bary region. Taking advantage of their discomfiture in 1636, he transferred his allegiance to the Ahom king, who installed him as one of his vassals at Hatsilah, paying no heed to the remonstrances of the Mughals for his surrender (*vide Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 174-76).

† *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. pp. 77-78: *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 99.

‡ Madhupur is about 16 miles north-west of Hajo (*vide* Kamrup District Map).

§ Shonda is about 2½ miles north-east of Nalbari *thanah*.

‖ Burpetha is 32 miles north-west of Hajo.

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Bali Narayan fell upon him with 300 Koch and Assamese troops, and compelled him to seek safety in flight across the Manas river into Khonthaghat. Not satisfied with this, Bali Narayan set fire to Uttama's residence at Barnagar, looted his belongings and captured his aunt, together with his son and daughter-in-law. * He then set up a fortified post there.

Defeat and flight of Uttama Narayan, the vassal chief of Barnagar.

Bali Narayan then attacked the Imperial outposts occupying the north-western corner of the modern Kamrup District. One by one, Chunari, Jakhali and the posts on the banks of the streams—Pohoomara, † Bekoora ‡ and Pota § fell into his hands. ‖ The expelled Mughal garrisons retreated southwards and halted at Bishnupur. ¶ Even there they had no respite from the pursuit of the Assamese, who dislodged them therefrom. The scattered forces then took refuge in different directions. Some went eastwards and halted at Batahkochi, $ some moved southwards to Bhabanipur, ₱ while others betook themselves to Jakhali Khana.)(Thinking further pursuit unnecessary, the victorious Assamese halted in two fortified

Imperial *thanahs* in the north-western corner of of Kamrup seized by Bali Narayan.

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* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 105-106.

† The stream rises in the Bhutan Hills, flows through Bijni and falls into the Chaulkhoa river. The *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 83 mentions this stream as "Pomari".

‡ It also rises in the Bhutan Hills, flows a few miles to the east of the Pohoomara, and joins the same main drainage channel.

§ The stream takes its rise in the Bhutan Hills, flows further east, and joins the Chaulkhoa river.

‖ *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 106.

¶ The *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 83 locates "Bishnupur 1½ *kos* distant from Kalapani river," which runs through Bijni *mauza*, in the north-western corner of Kamrup District.

$ Batakochi is about 8 miles north-east of Nalbari *thanah*.

₱ Bhabanipur *mauza* lies about 8 miles to the north of Burpetha.

)(Unidentified.

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camps, one at Nimisa,* and the other a few miles to its north, on the bank of the Kalapani river. Both parties having been thoroughly worn out, warfare was now stopped for some time. †

With the suspension of hostilities, the first phase of the struggle came to an end. The result of ten months of continuous warfare (March-December, 1636) was, on the whole, disastrous to the Mughals. True, they had defeated the Ahoms in a few minor engagements near Pandu, and for a time recovered Srighat, but this did not lead to any lasting result. In *Uttarkol* as well as in *Dakhinkol*, almost all their fortified posts, including Hajo and Pandu, were lost. Imperial authority in Kamrup was completely undermined, and the Mughals lay "cabined, cribbed and confined" in a few isolated posts only.

Temporary cessation of hostilities (*c.* December, 1636).

With the arrival of reinforcements under Mir Zainu-d din (the brother of Islam Khan), assisted by Allah Yar Khan, the second phase of the Ahom-Mughal combat began. This was towards the end of December, 1636. Undismayed by the gloomy aspect of affairs in Kamrup, the Mir at once took vigorous steps to restore Mughal supremacy there.

Arrival of a fresh army under Mir Zainu-d din, ushered in the second phase of the war (*c.* December, 1636-April, 1638).

Chandra Narayan, who had made himself the master of Kari Bary region, and was stationed at Hatsilah, was the first object of the Mir's attack. At the news of the approach of the Mughal host, Chandra Narayan fled from Kari Bary, and retreated to his former seat of authority in *parganah* Solmari. The Mughals thus regained their lost hold on the south-western frontier region without

Chandra Narayan evacuated *Dakhinkol*, which was reoccupied by the Mughals (*c.* Jan.-Feb. 1637).

* "Neemoha," about 6 miles north of Bhabanipur in Kamrup district, is probably meant.

† *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai : The Purani Asama Buranji* p. 106 agrees in general with the account of the *Ahom Buranji*, though not following its details.

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any effort. The fortifications raised by Chandra Narayan were then levelled down, and the submission of the petty chiefs of Kari Bary secured. To complete the pacification of the region, a fortified *thanah* was made, garrisoned by 400 matchlockmen and *paiks*. *

Capture of Raja Satrajit at Dhubri, followed by his execution at Jahangirnagar.

The Imperialists then entered "*parganah* Mardangi," † the chief of which, though father-in-law to Chandra Narayan, was won over by them. The zamindar of Solmari *parganah* had fled to Khonthaghat, being afraid of Chandra Narayan. He also joined the Mughals, who then crossed the Brahmaputra into *Uttarkol*, and came to Dhubri, where they fell in with the traitor Satrajit, together with the transport vessels he had detained there. Clear proof of his nefarious activities on various occasions having been obtained by the Mughal *subahdar*, the latter had already issued orders to capture him. He was accordingly caught and sent to Jahangirnagar, where he paid the penalty of his wickedness and treachery with his life.

Significance of the event in Kamrup history.

The execution of Raja Satrajit is a memorable episode in the history of Mughal Kamrup. For about a quarter of a century (1612—37), he had been a prominent official in Kamrup, and had for long held charge of the local fleet at Pandu. But the enjoyment of too much power and influence turned his head. Though his early faithful and ungrudging service made him a tower of strength to Mughal Kamrup, his subsequent treachery and mischievous activities caused the greatest injury to it. He was fully responsible for the severe defeat sustained at Srighat, and, it was he who afterwards hastened the fall of Hajo, by the detention of the transport

* *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 78.

† No *parganah* of this name appears in either Rennell's Map or in Goalpara District Map. The latter, however, shows a place "Madaridanga", on the right bank of the Brahmaputra, adjacent to the west of *parganah* Kari Bary.

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vessels bound for its relief. He now met with his desert. His removal from the political arena in Kamrup really improved the Imperial affairs there, and deprived the Assamese of an able and resourceful ally.

After the capture of Raja Satrajit, the Imperialists, under Mir Zainu-d din and Allah Yar Khan, left Dhubri and marched eastwards through Khonthaghat. While they had crossed the Khanpur river, Pashupati,* a vassal zamindar, who was employed with some men for clearing jungles and preparing the way for the main army, brought news that the enemies were within sight.

The Imperial army moved eastwards to recover the lost possessions in Kamrup.

The news of the arrival of Mir Zainu-d din and his party, and their initial success in re-establishing the Imperial authority in the western part of Kamrup, had roused the Assamese to great activity. With a force of 12000 *paiks*, and 50 war-boats, besides many transport vessels, they advanced westwards down the Brahmaputra, to check the further progress of the reinforced Mughals. Reaching Jogighopa, situated amidst dense jungles on a hill on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, just to the east of its confluence with the Manas, the Assamese made a strong fort there. To strengthen their position, they made another fort on the opposite bank at Hirapur, while their fleet lay anchored in the mid-stream between these two forts.

The Assam king fortified Jogighopa, and opposed further advance of the Mughals.

Their basis of operations thus secured, the Assamese moved westwards and came upon Pashupati and his men. At the first encounter, Pashupati, with 3000 matchlockmen, drove away the Assamese. The main Mughal army then attacked the stronghold of Jogighopa. The Assamese offered a strong defence, but were compelled to evacuate the

Fort Jogighopa captured, the Mughals crossed the Manas into Kamrup (*c.* March, 1637).

* The *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, more than once, mentions Madhusudan and his son Pashupati as vassal zamindars, doing good service to the Mughal cause in Kamrup.

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fort and retreat eastwards, while the Imperialists crossed the Manas river into Kamrup proper.

Death of Chandra Narayan.

At that time Chandra Narayan, who had been a stubborn enemy in *Dakhinkol*, died of smallpox.* His death came as a great relief to the Imperialists, and it much simplified the task of pacification of that region. A flying column of 1000 cavalry and 4000 *paiks*, was soon sent under Muhammad Zaman, together with a strong fleet under Masum Khan, the Bengal zamindar, to work in co-operation with one another in purging the region south of the Brahmaputra of further rebel elements. This was soon accomplished, and the whole army then moved to Chandankotha, where it encamped for the rains. †

Barnagar recovered, the Mughals faced Bali Narayan, entrenched in the north-western border of Kamrup (*c.* April, 1637).

Meanwhile urgent appeals for help reached from Uttama Narayan, who, as I have already noted, had been driven from his realm by Bali Narayan and had taken refuge in Khonthaghat. A strong contingent of cavalry, *paiks* and matchlockmen, was sent under Muhammad Zaman, to aid the faithful vassal in recovering his lost domain. Accompanied by Uttama, the Mughal officer crossed the stream Pohoomara, and recaptured the stockade on its bank from the Assamese, who hastily retired to Srighat. ‡ Muhammad Zaman next marched upon Barnagar, only to find that Bali Narayan had given up his fortifications and withdrawn northwards to a jungly and hilly region, named Chotri, § making several strongholds there. The Imperialists, who were determined to

* *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 82. In face of the clear testimony of the *Padishahnamah*, regarding Chandra Narayan's death as a result of illness, it is surprising to find that Gait (History of Assam, p. 115) should ascribe it to battle.

† *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 82.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 83. : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

§ "Khotreejhar," about 18 miles north of Barnagar, in Kamrup District. The Kalapani river flows by, about 2 miles to the west-of it.

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pursue Bali Narayan, marched to Bishnupur, which stood on a rising ground, full of jungles, and encamped there.

Bali Narayan was really alarmed at the firm attitude of the Mughals, and made adequate preparations to meet them. Having received reinforcements from Pandu and Srighat, which swelled his ranks to 40000, he boldly moved from Chotri, and made several fortifications on the bank of the Kalapani river, opposite to the Mughal camp, and put strong garrisons there. With the remnant of his troops, he encamped at a strategic point two miles away, amidst dense jungle. He then made several night-attacks on the camp at Bishnupur, and, by obstructing the path of food supply with the help of the fortifications already made, reduced the Mughals there to great straits. But no decisive result followed. Warfare was then suspended for the rains, which Muhammad Zaman spent at Bishnupur. *

Indecisive warfare with Bali Narayan, reinforced by the Assamese, followed by suspension of hostilities for the rains (May to October, 1637).

With the end of the rains, the main Mughal army left Chandankotha and moved to Bishnupur, to be joined there by Muhammad Zaman's forces. Anxious to strike a decisive blow before the hostile corps could effect a junction, Bali Narayan requisitioned a batch of 20000 Assamese soldiers from Pandu, under the command of the son-in-law of the Assam king. A night-attack on Muhammad Zaman's forces was made on the 31st of October, 1637, and two of his unfinished stockades were captured. † Next morning, the Mughal commander took the offensive and attacked the Assamese fortifications. By his vigour and military skill, he carried all before him, and by noon, succeeded in driving the enemy to the other side of the Kalapani river. 15 stockades (which

After the rains, Bali Narayan made a night-attack on the Mughals with initial success, but was severely defeated afterwards, with great loss, near Bishnupur (1st November, 1637).

* *Padishahnamah*, Vol. 11. pp 83-84.

† *Ibid*, p. 84 : *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 107

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were made on this side of the river in front of the Imperialist camp) were taken, more than 4000 Assamese, with some of their chiefs, were killed, and many guns and other weapons were seized. Bali Narayan with the remaining forces then fell back on his main camp. * This was also given up, and he then retreated southwards, towards the stronghold of Burpetah. An attempt to surprise the Mughal *thanah* (on the east) of Batahkochi, though at first successful, ultimately turned out to be a failure. †

The decisive defeat inflicted by the Mughals on Bali Narayan and the Assamese, on the 1st of November, 1637, near Bishnupur, marked the turn of the tide of fortune in their favour. The main army now joined Muhammad Zaman's detachment at Bishnupur, and twenty days later (on the 21st November, 1637), the united host moved southwards, in order to make a three-fold attack upon Bali Narayan, who was entrenched at Burpetah. A sharp engagement by land and water, lasting for about 4 hours, took place. Bali Narayan was totally defeated, and the fort of Burpetah was seized by the Mughals. A large number of the soldiers were killed and a few officers captured, while some more, including the son-in-law of the Assam king, lay dead on the field. ‡ The shattered remnants of the Assamese host fled to Srighat, where the king was encamped with the heavy baggage and the fleet, while Bali Nayran escaped to his own domain, Darrang.

Battle of Burpetah resulted in a crushing defeat for the Assamese under Bali Narayan and his flight to Darrang (21st November, 1637).

The capture of Burpetah was followed by the recovery of Hajo. § The Imperialists then turned their attention to regain-

* *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. pp. 84-85.

† *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

‡ *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 107-08 : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : The *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 86 describes the battle but does not name its site.

§ *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 87.

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ing possession of the forts of Srighat and Pandu. The Ahom garrison at Agiathuti was first attacked. Unable to resist the invaders, it retired to Srighat, leaving the post in the hands of the Mughals. *

Recovery of Hajo by the Mughals (*c.* Dec. 1637).

The next important event was the combined attempt by the Mughal army and the fleet upon the hill-fort of Srighat, which had become the rallying point of the discomfited Assamese. The outward fortifications at the foot of the hill were first captured in the midst of a heavy cannonade. The Imperial fleet then attacked the Assamese war-boats stationed near by, and inflicted a crushing defeat upon it. A large number of the enemy were killed, and Srighat passed into the hands of the Mughals. †

Followed by the reconquest of Srighat.

Pandu next felt the impact of their attack. The remnants of the Assamese army and the fleet had taken shelter there, and these were severely assailed by the Mughal navy. There was hardly a battle. It was a mere rout. The Assamese, disheartened and demoralised by their successive defeats, offered little resistance, and a good many of them threw themselves into the water in despair and perished. Masum Khan wrought a great havoc on the ranks of the enemy with his own ships. About 500 of the war-boats and 300 guns were captured by the Mughals. ‡ The few Assamese who survived this disastrous defeat, hastened up the Brahmaputra to Kaliabar.

Naval battle at Pandu ended in Assamese defeat (*c.* Jan. 1638).

The whole of Kamrup was thus cleared of the enemy and re-annexed to the Delhi Empire. The task of the Mughals was now practically completed. But they were anxious to give

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam.

† *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 87 : *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 108 ; *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

‡ *Ibid.*

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a finishing touch to it by the capture of the Assamese fort of Kajali. It occupied a strategic position at the confluence of the Kalang river with the Brahmaputra, and, being surrounded by hills on three sides, was the impregnable frontier post of the Assam realm, and was garrisoned by a strong army and protected by an adequate fleet.

Mughal advance into Assam.

From Pandu, the Mughal fleet sailed up the Brahmaputra, and attacked the fort of Kajali. A stubborn resistance was offered by the garrison there, working in co-operation with the fleet, and the first onslaught of the Mughals was successfully repelled. A heavy loss of men occurred on both sides. Finding their task rather difficult, the Mughals had recourse to a trick. Feigning defeat, they withdrew with their fleet into a secluded corner. Thither the jubilant Assamese fleet was drawn in, in pursuit of the Mughals, who, all on a sudden, turned back, and resumed hostilities with great vigour. The Assamese were taken by surprise, and a great confusion ensued in their ranks, of which the Mughals took full advantage. The disorganised fleet fell an easy prey to them. The naval defeat was the signal for the flight of the garrison from the Kajali fort, which was at once occupied by the Mughals, who seized a great many ships as well as a large quantity of war-materials. The Assamese commander-in-chief, the Bar Barua, had a narrow escape, and he retreated to Kaliabar with the remnant of his troops. *

Naval victory at Kajali and the conquest of the Ahom frontier fort by the Mughal army (*c.* Feb.-Jan., 1638).

In view of the strategic importance of their new prize, the Mughals made two watch-posts, one on each side of the river, for its security, and placed them in charge of a strong garrison, consisting of 1000 cavalry, 3000 matchlockmen and 2000 *paiks*. An adequate fleet, under a few trusty zamindars, was also posted there.

Kajali fort strengthened by two stockades.

* *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. pp. 88-89 : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 109-10.

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Having spent three months (February-April, 1638) in the pacification of the border regions, the Mughals repaired to Kohhata ("once a populous city, on an elevated plot of ground in *Uttarkol*, situated mid-way between Srighat and Kajali"), famous as the eastern frontier city of the Mughals, and quartered there for the rains. *

The Mughal army encamped at Kohhata for the rains (May-October, 1638).

Meanwhile vigorous attempts were set on foot to hunt down Bali Narayan, who had fled to Darrang after the crushing defeat at Burpetah. He was chased hard from hill to hill by a Mughal detachment, and at last reached Singri, † there to die of pestilence, ‡ with his two sons and followers. § Darrang was then occupied and purged of rebellious elements, after which the Mughal contingent came back to Kohhata.

Bali Narayan's death.

The death of Bali Narayan was an event of signal importance not only in the history of Kamrup but also in that of the Ahom-Mughal politics. It removed the stormy petrel of the waters of Kamrup politics and the brain of the Assamese hostility against the Mughals. His career is a long-drawn tragedy of unrealised ambition and unfulfilled enterprise. From the time he sought refuge with the Assam king till his death, he waged an unrelenting war against the Mughals, and the history of the north-east frontier for about a quarter of a century, really turns round his unwearied and ceaseless hostili-

Its importance in Kamrup history.

* *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 89.

† It is a hilly place on the bank of the Brahmaputra, about 20 miles to the west of Tezpur.

‡ Gait (History of Assam, p. 118) tells us, "Dharma Narayan and his two sons were eventually killed." This is obviously a mistake. The *Padishahnamah* clearly informs us that he, with his two sons and many followers, died of disease.

§ *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 89. The *Purani Asama Buranji* and the *Ahom Buranji* do not mention Bali Narayan after the defeat of Burpetah.

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ties, and the frantic efforts of the Mughals to counteract them. But misfortune made him her favourite. Notwithstanding his occasional triumphs, he ultimately failed in his lifelong task, and, having been robbed of his seat of authority, was pursued hotly by the Mughals through the hills of Darrang, to die at last in ignominy and despair. Though branded as a mischievous rebel in Mughal chronicles, he was really inspired with a noble mission to rid his country of foreign foes. A halo of patriotic glory lingers round his tragic figure. It may perhaps well be said of him—"never perhaps was the noble struggle of man with fate, waged more nobly than by him."

A retrospect of the second phase of the war.

The capture of Kajali, followed by the death of Bali Narayan, the arch-enemy of the Mughals, records the high-water mark of Imperial success in the Assamese warfare. As a result of strenuous exertions for about a year and a quarter (*c.* January, 1637 to April, 1638), the Mughals had not only succeeded in recovering the lost territories in *Uttarkol* and *Dakhinkol* but had also provided for the security of their realm by occupying the border region of Darrang in the north, and Kajali, the fortified gateway of the Assam domain, in the south.

The second phase of the struggle thus ended in the total discomfiture of the Assamese, who, terribly alarmed, soon removed themselves far into the interior of their own domain, leaving the Mughals in undisputed possession of Kamrup. Had they now desisted from further hostilities and used their superior position (both material and moral) in concluding a peace with the enemy, the profits and glories of the war would have been their own. But this was not to be. Intoxicated with the rapid success of their arms, the Mughals determined to carry the war into the heart of the enemy territory, so as to pay it back in its own coin. Though they gained initial success in their new policy, it ultimately spelt disaster, and spoilt the fruits of their victory altogether.

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The new Mughal policy of a daring offensive ushers in the third and the longest phase of the war. At the end of rains (in October, 1638) the Mughal army and the fleet advanced up the Brahmaputra to its junction with the Bharali and halted there, opposite to Samdhara.* Pran Narayan, the Koch king, accompanied the Imperialists on this occasion.

Third phase of the war began—the Mughals advanced up the Brahmaputra and halted opposite to Samdhara (Oct., 1638).

Meanwhile the Assam king was not idle. He rallied his scattered and worn-out forces at Kaliabar, and thoroughly reorganised them. They were then sent to Samdhara, with instructions to strengthen the fortifications there, with a view to making a stand against the Mughals. Fort Samdhara was a great bulwark of the Assamese. Situated on an elevated spot, just to the east of the confluence of the Bharali river with the Brahmaputra, a few miles up Tezpur, it commanded a good view of the surrounding region, and was hardly accessible to the Mughal cavalry. After a month and half's careful work, during which time the Mughals were hoodwinked into a suspension of hostilities, the fortifications were completed,† and the re-fitted Assamese host stood ready for a fresh trial of strength with their foes.

The Assam king rallied his army at fort Samdhara.

After light skirmishes had taken place for some time, the Mughal army crossed the Bharali and made a serious attempt, in co-operation with the fleet, to take the impregnable fort of Samdhara by storm. A severe struggle raged all day long, from early dawn till sunset. Though the faint-hearted Assamese admiral retired from the struggle after a slight rebuff, the garrison in the fort offered such a brilliant defence that the Mughals were compelled to give up the contest with a great loss of men.‡

Futile Mughal attack upon Samdhara.

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*: *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 110.

† *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 111.

‡ *Ibid*, pp. 111-12.

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The futile attempt upon Samdhara failed to be an eye-opener to the Mughals. Deaf to the voice of reason and prudence, and, obsessed with the superiority of their navy, they decided to use it to the best advantage, in a final engagement with the Assamese. Instead of retiring from the contest, they advanced up the Brahmaputra, and crossing it over to *Dakhinkol*, encamped at Duimunisila, a place above Kaliabar, and there got ready for a fresh encounter. *

Followed by their march to Duimunisila.

Anxious to put a stop to the growing presumptions of the Mughals, the Assamese, with their full strength of equipage, at once moved from Samdhara, and struck the enemy with all their might. A bloody battle lasting for 3 days took place at Duimunisila. The waters of the Brahmaputra and the Dikrai "turned red" (as it were) with the blood of the Mughals, wounded and fallen. Their provisions also ran short. Thoroughly discomfited, they were compelled to beat an ignominious retreat down the Brahmaputra. Fort Kajali now slipped from the hands of the Mughals, who halted further down at Gauhati. Thus ended disastrously their second aggressive attempt upon the domain of the Assam king, full twenty three years after the failure of the first. †

Naval battle of Duimunisila—crushing defeat of the Mughals and the loss of Kajali fort (*c.* Nov., 1638).

Completely worn out by the vicissitudes of the prolonged warfare, Mir Zainu-d din (titled Sayadat Khan by the Mughal Emperor for his good services during the second phase of the war), with Muhammad Zaman, Masum Khan, Uttama Narayan and Pran Narayan, now retired from Kamrup, leaving Allah Yar Khan in charge of the Imperial affairs there. ‡

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* *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 112.

† *Ibid.* The accounts of the battles of Samdhara and Duimunisila as given in the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Purani Asama Buranji* are rather confusing.

‡ *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 113.

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The battle of Duimunisila brought to a close the hard struggle which had begun in 1636. The crushing defeat sustained by the Mughals, greatly affected the superior position which they had gained during the second phase of the struggle. Not to speak of the great loss of men and materials, their military prestige, and especially their much-vaunted naval supremacy, were completely undermined. True they still retained their hold on Kamrup intact, but the humiliating defeat, with the inevitable loss of moral influence, boded ill for its future security.

Evil effect of the last naval defeat on the Mughals.

Hardly had the Assam campaign ended, the Bengal viceroy, Islam Khan, was summoned by the Mughal Emperor to assume the office of his *vizier* at Delhi.* Deprived of his able guidance, the officials of Kamrup headed by Allah Yar Khan, already weakened by the withdrawal of Mir Zainu-d din and his party, became very anxious to come to terms with the Assam king.

Their great anxiety for peace.

The Ahom ruler, on his part, was also quite willing to fall in with the peaceful designs of the Mughals. Though the last stage of the contest had ended in a signal defeat for the foreigners, leading to their total expulsion from his realm, the prolonged hostilities had visibly affected his man-power, and also taxed his material resources heavily. So he was eager to take advantage of the favourable turn of affairs to conclude peace with honour.

The Assam king also inclined towards peace with honour.

Negotiations were accordingly set on foot through envoys for a treaty of peace between the two sides. For the first time, the Assam king recognised formally the supremacy of the Mughals in Kamrup, while the Mughal *faujdar*, Allah Yar Khan, readily acknowledged the independent authority of the ruler of Assam. The Mughals gave

The treaty of peace signed early in Feb., 1639.

* *Alamgirnamah*, p. 680. *Masir-ul-umara*, Vol. I. p. 162.

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up all pretensions to the territories east of the Bar Nadi on the north and the Kalang on the south, and the Assam king too agreed in return to withhold further interference in Kamrup. Thus the river Bar Nadi in *Uttarkol* and the causeway of Asur in *Dakhinkol*, were fixed as the boundaries of Mughal Kamrup and Assam, and Gauhati now passed under Mughal control. The parties sealed the conclusion of peace by the establishment of trade and commercial intercourse between them. * This took place early in February, 1639. †

Section II. (B). Ahom-Mughal History (1639–58).

Ahom-Mughal history for the period 1639-58 obscure.

The history of Mughal Kamrup in its relation with Assam, during the two decades that followed the conclusion of peace at the beginning of 1639, is shrouded in deep obscurity, and it is no wonder that historians have hitherto observed complete silence about it.

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* *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 113, 170-72 : Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam. The *Ahom Buranji* is entirely silent with regard to the peace negotiations.

It is curious to note that the *Padishahnamah*, the only contemporary Mughal chronicle, ends the history of this protracted campaign with the glorious achievements of the Mughals in the first quarter of 1638 (culminating in the capture of Kajali and the occupation of Darrang), omitting altogether the story of their great discomfiture in the last phase of the struggle, which adversely affected their fortune. It is only from the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*, and more particularly from the *Purani Asama Buranji*, followed by Dr. Wade's book, that we get an account of the dismal failure which attended the second aggressive attempt of the Mughals upon the domain of the Assam king. That the net result of the Assamese warfare was not at all glorifying, and, as a matter of fact, rather compromising for the Mughals, is borne out indirectly by the author of the *Alamgirnamah*. He tells us that Islam Khan's punitive expedition against the Assam king reached "Kajal" (Kajali) only, and did not result in any decisive issue, for, the Bengal viceroy was shortly after recalled by the Mughal Emperor. The *Riyaz-us-Salatin* (pp. 212-13) and Stewart's History of Bengal (p. 156) also inform us, apparently on the basis of the earlier Persian chronicles, that the work of Assam conquest was left incomplete by Islam Khan.

† Wade's MS. History of Assam.

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The publication within recent times of a series of diplomatic letters exchanged between Allah Yar Khan, the *faujdar* of Kamrup, and Mamai Tamuli, the Bar Barua or the "chief secretary" of the Assam king, throws a flood of light on the relation which subsisted between the two sides during the early years of this period.

Some diplomatic letters, recently published, lighten up this dark age.

The diplomatic correspondence ushers us into a new era—an era of peace and diplomatic intercourse in the history of the north-east frontier policy of Mughal India, which appears to have lasted throughout the remaining years of Shah Jahan's reign. Though constant bickerings and quarrels, over various topics of inter-state politics, went on during this epoch, yet there was no appeal to arms for their final solution. Both the Mughal and the Assamese seem to have been well-nigh sick of the protracted warfare, and needed time to recoup their strength and resources. Peace and security mark the tenor of Ahom-Mughal history of this period. This state of affairs was only upset by the War of Succession, which enveloped the political horizon of Mughal India, consequent on Shah Jahan's fatal illness in the autumn of 1657.

Beginnings of a new epoch of peace and diplomacy in Ahom-Mughal politics.

It is easy to gather from the diplomatic letters that Allah Yar Khan, son of Iftikar Khan, who had seen service during the last Assamese warfare, continued to be in charge of Kamrup for about seven years following the peace treaty (1639-45),* while Prince Muhammad Shuja was the viceroy ruling in Bengal. Allah Yar Khan was an able and experienced official and managed his charge quite well.

Allah Yar Khan, governor of Kamrup (1639-45).

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* A word of explanation with regard to the date of the diplomatic letters (exchanged between Allah Yar Khan and the Assamese Bar Barua) as given by the author of the *Purani Asama Buranji*, is necessary here. The letters cover a period of about seven years, *Saka* 1551 to 1557, which corresponds to 1629-35 A. D. Now, according to the unimpeachable testimony of the contemporary Persian chronicle—the *Padishahnamah*, Allah Yar Khan led the

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Removal of the capital to Gauhati.

The branch of the river Brahmaputra flowing by Hajo having already dried up, the headquarters of the Mughal provincial government were now shifted to Gauhati, already an important town occupying the north bank of the Brahmaputra, which had come under its possession by virtue of the terms of the treaty of 1639.

Contemporary Assam affairs.

In Assam, the powerful and capable king, Pratap Singh, died after a long reign of 38 years in 1601 A. D. Two weak and incompetent rulers, one a grossly immoral youth, the other a confirmed invalid, followed in quick succession till Jayadhvaj Singh came to the throne in 1648. During this period of weakness of the central authority, the Bar Barua who had

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Imperialist forces during the siege of Hughli, 1632-33 A. D. and came to serve in Kamrup only in the winter of 1636, in the train of Mir Zainu-d din, the brother of Islam Khan—the then Bengal *subahdar*. Obviously there is something wrong in the date of the diplomatic correspondence given in the *Purani Asama Buranji*. Fortunately, its author gives a clue (p. 222) which enables us to correct (though roughly) his own error. He tells us, "According to Mir Lutfullah's version, there had been suspension of warfare with the Assamese for about twenty-one years since the days of Allah Yar Khan." Counting backwards a period of 21 years from the latest accepted date of the term of Mir Lutfullah's office *i. e.*, 1658 A. D. we get 1631 as the approximate date of the beginning of Allah Yar Khan's rule in Kamrup. Since Allah Yar's peace negotiations fructified early in 1639, his letters must have been dated from that year onwards, and must have continued till 1645 A. D. It is just possible that the error in the *Purani Asama Buranji* should be written off as the "printer's devil", for, if we change the third digit of the *Saka* date to 6 in place of 5, we arrive at the right point.

It may be pointed out in passing that the *Padishahnamah* (Vol. II. p. 94) mentions Mir Nurullah of Herat as having been appointed *thanahdar* of Koch Hajo after the peace of 1639. Gunabhiram Barua's Assam *Buranji* (p. 78) also refers to him. But the *Purani Asama Buranji* omits his name altogether. It seems likely he was not destined to enjoy his new dignity for a long time or was probably thrown into shade completely by the superior ability and experience of Allah Yar Khan, whose name alone bulks so largely in official correspondence.

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his seat at Kajali,* was really the *persona grata*, with whom diplomatic intercourse took place.

Key-note of Ahom-Mughal political history (1639-45)—endless diplomatic quarrels.

The key-note of the political history of this period is the endless criminations and recriminations of the Mughals and the Assamese, on various grounds, *viz.*, *khedah* operations, trade and commercial intercourse, boundary disputes, extradition of political offenders and violation of personal liberty, rights and privileges of the subject people.

Conclusion of peace followed by trade and commercial intercourse—a fruitful source of jealousy and ill-will.

I have already remarked that an eager desire to participate in the rich forest and the other resources of the Assam realm had been a dominant factor in bringing the Mughals into conflict with the Assamese, ever since their conquest of Kamrup. The cessation of hostilities in 1639, was at once followed by the resumption of trade and commercial intercourse with Assam. In exchange for elephants' tusk, hide of "chamari" cow, pepper, musk, silk-cloth, gold, lignum-aloes and "jaluk" and other kinds of aromatic plants to be had in abundance in Assam, the Assamese used to import from the Mughal domain various kinds of winter clothings *e. g.*, "Lahori", "Bapta" and "Banat", to protect themselves against the rigours of cold in their hilly habitation. Besides these wearing apparels, articles of daily consumption—sugar, salt and spices, as well as chemicals, such as, saltpetre and sulphur, were also much in demand. Merchants moved to and fro, carrying on a brisk trade in the two realms. †

One of the most favourite pastimes of the Mughals, was the undertaking of *khedah* operations in the hills of Darrang, which were full of wild elephants. Interruption in this pro-

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 78.

† *Padishahnamah*, Vol. II. p. 68 : *Fathiya* (translated in JBORS, Vol. I. pp. 187-88). The *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 170-172, 174, 178, 184, 186, 188, 197, 201, 207, 209, 212, 214, 221-22 mentions the various articles of merchandise and also the gifts interchanged between the two sides.

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fitable enterprise, was very often the topic of diplomatic correspondence. In March, 1644, Allah Yar Khan complained to the Bar Barua that the *khedah* work indulged in with impunity by the Mughals in the hilly regions of Assam, ever since the days of Raja Satrajit, was now being disturbed by the incursions of the Bhutias and the Dafias, who had killed some men of the *khedah* party. The Mughal *faujdar* charged the Assamese officials with apathy and inaction, with regard to remedying the state of affairs. The Bar Barua gave a stern rebuff, and pointed out that in spite of the repeated warnings of his predecessors as well as himself, the Imperialists had been persisting in their attempt to capture elephants far beyond their own domain—in the wilds of Darrang, in face of the opposition of the neighbouring hill-men. He added that as these were not at all amenable to discipline and were entirely beyond the control of the Assam king, he was unable to redress the wrongs committed. *

Exchange of letters regarding *khedah* troubles of the Mughals in Assam.

Bonafide trade matters often gave rise to grave complications, and these came in for diplomatic settlement. In a letter dated, March, 1641, Allah Yar Khan asked from the Bar Barua, a list of the Assamese merchants who usually carried on trade near the Mughal frontier (probably for the purpose of realising toll dues from them). The Bar Barua in his reply (August, 1641), instructed the Mughal *faujdar* to get the required list from his own frontier officials. † In April, 1643, the *faujdar* addressed the Bar Barua again. He suggested that as the Mughal subjects had been carrying on a brisk trade informally in Assam realm, as far as Singri, ‡ Balipara, § and

Trade disputes—an important topic of diplomatic intervention.

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 192

† *Ibid*, pp. 176—78.

‡ Singri stands on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, about 20 miles west of Tezpur.

§ Balipara is on the left bank of the Mansiri river, about 16 miles north of Tezpur.

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Bargaon, * since the days of Raja Satrajit, it was high time that a formal trade-convention should now be made (so as to obviate future troubles). The Assamese governor gave a blunt reply, in which he seriously challenged the right of the foreigners to trade, without formal permission, in the domain of his king. He sternly repudiated the suggestions for a trade-agreement and declared such trade as had been carried on as illegal. † In spite of the strong representation of the Bar Barua, such abuses appear to have continued unabated.

Another fruitful source of trouble and a topic of frequent diplomatic intercourse, was the dispute with regard to the boundaries of Mughal Kamrup and Assam. Though the treaty of 1639 had definitely fixed the territorial limits of the two kingdoms, and though the paramount necessity for the faithful observance of the treaty stipulations on this point, was equally emphasised by both the parties in their official correspondence, encroachments upon the domain of one another were of frequent occurrence, and were sought to be remedied by diplomatic intervention. In August, 1640, the Bar Barua wrote to the *faujdar* at Gauhati, regarding the repatriation of an Assamese official, who, in course of his itinerary, had crossed the Bar Nadi and reached the region of the Sarania hills (east of the modern Gauhati), in the company of some Mughal sepoys, and had been sent to Dacca, the capital of the Bengal *subah*. ‡ The tables were soon turned, and early in April, 1643, we find the Mughal *faujdar* remonstrating against the confinement, followed by the misappropriation of the property, of 63 Mughal subjects (including traders and officials), who had strayed into the realm of the Assam king and reached near Darrang. He also complained against the officer-in-charge of the Assamese frontier-post, as attempting to encroach

Boundary quarrels—another subject of diplomatic interference.

* Bargaon occupies the left bank of the Botolah river, about 5½ miles north-east of Singri.

† *Purani Asama Buranji* pp. 182, 185.

‡ *Ibid*, pp. 177.

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upon the territories of Kamrup, and create mischief and misunderstanding by false allegations against the Imperialists. * Curiously enough, both sides formally pretended ignorance with regard to their own offences, and the remonstrances apparently bore no fruit. † In November, 1645, a batch of 107 Mughal sepoys crossed the Bar Nadi, the acknowledged boundary of Kamrup and Assam, entered Darrang, and proceeded as far as Singri, with a view to catching elephants there, paying no heed to the protests of the Assamese frontier officer. In a scuffle that ensued with two of the Mughal sepoys, the Assamese officer was killed. Enraged at the news of this outrage, the Bar Barua imprisoned the sepoys. When the *faujdar* interceded with the Bar Barua on behalf of his men, the latter apparently refused to set them free, on the ground that they were guilty of a double offence—entrance into Assam domain without permission and the murder of an Assamese official on duty. Convinced of the gravity of the guilt of his subordinates, the *faujdar* seems to have desisted from further interference in that affair. ‡

Questions with regard to the extradition of political offenders often found a prominent place in official correspondence.

Extradition of political offenders often necessitated official correspondence.

Early in 1641, Allah Yar Khan wrote to the Bar Barua, regretting the refusal of the Assam king (in the past) to deliver to the Imperialists, the traitor Chandra Narayan, son of Parikshit, whom he had given asylum. The Bar Barua in reply, retorted that the Mughals had no reason to complain on that score, as they themselves had been guilty of the same offence with regard to the four sons of Bali Narayan (brother of Parikshit), who had deserted the side of the Assam king and gone over to them. The piquant reply of the Assamese officer entirely silenced the Mughal *faujdar*, and the matter

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 182-83.

† *Ibid*, pp. 183, 185.

‡ *Ibid*, pp. 210, 214, 216-17, 220.

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dropped there. * In April, 1646, the Bar Barua, in course of a long letter, brought in a similar accusation against the Mughals, as having been guilty of harbouring Mamu Govinda, the chief of Beltala, who had betrayed his suzerain, the Assam king. †

Frequent violation of the liberty, rights and privileges of the subject people, treated diplomatically.

The last but not the least potent cause of friction between the Mughals and the Assamese, was furnished by the frequent violation of personal liberty, rights and privileges of the subject people, on both sides. In a letter written in August, 1640, the Bar Barua tries to exonerate himself from the charge of confining a Mughal subject, a musician (who had voluntarily visited Assam), by suggesting that the latter had already gone back to his own place, never to return. ‡ About two years later (April, 1642), Allah Yar Khan wrote in a similar strain to the Bar Barua, protesting ignorance with regard to the alleged imprisonment of three Assamese subjects by the Mughal officials, as well as to the frequent molestation of the frontier officers by them. This evasive reply apparently failed to satisfy the Bar Barua, who made strong representation against the abuses, but to no purpose. §

History of Kamrup in its relation to Assam, 1639-1645, really eventful.

The history of Ahom-Mughal relation during the years immediately following the peace of 1639, is thus far from being an uneventful one. Though owing to the exhaustion of the parties and the peculiar political circumstances of the period, a recurrence of hostilities was rather impracticable, it would be idle to suppose that the peace offered a lasting settlement of disputes, or that its terms were faithfully adhered to by the signatories. In fact, the treaty of 1639 was honoured more in its frequent breach than in its due observance.

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* *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 175-77, 179.

† *Ibid*, p. 220.

‡ *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 177.

§ *Ibid*, pp. 183, 185.

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A critical examination of the meagre historical materials extant, leads me to suggest that the Mughals were more often guilty of breach of treaty stipulations than the Assamese. Their spirit of adventure and cupidity having been roused by the abundance of elephants, aloes-wood, musk, gold *etc.*, in Assam, they would not let slip any occasion to cross the border in the east and move up the Brahmaputra into the heart of the country, in quest of them. Other causes of petty jealousy and pin-pricks were also not wanting. The armoury of peace was often well-nigh exhausted, and warfare seemed imminent. Only the diplomatic skill and forbearance of the Mughal *faujdar* on the one hand, and the spirit of reasonableness, moderation and compromise of the Assamese "chief secretary", on the other, avoided an open rupture.

The Mughals more often guilty of breach of peace-treaty than the Assamese.

The tenure of Allah Yar Khan's government in Kamrup ended towards the beginning of 1646. * A period of almost unrelieved gloom and obscurity now follows in the Ahom-Mughal history, till we reach the times of Mir Lutfullah of Shiraz, who was the *faujdar* of Kamrup, during the last days of Shah Jahan's rule.

End of Allah Yar's government introduces a dark period in Kamrup history.

From the scanty materials available, it is clear that after Allah Yar's retirement, at least five *faujdars* ruled Kamrup in rapid succession, with their head-quarters at Gauhati, till the times of Mir Lutfullah of Shiraz came on. The first in the field was Nawab Khandari, who governed for less than a year (1646), and was followed by Mirza Husain, whose period of rule was equally short (1647). Then came Sayyid Husain, who died at Gauhati at the end of a year (1648). The next *faujdar* of Kamrup was Sayyid Kutub, who ruled for three years (1649-51). He was succeeded by Sayyid Saleh, who died in harness, two years after the assump-

Successors of Allah Yar Khan in Kamrup mere names.

* The latest date of the diplomatic letters addressed to him by the Bar Barua is some time in April, 1646 (*vide Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 222).

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tion of office (1651-53). Mir Lutfullah of Shiraz was then appointed *faujdar*.* He governed Kamrup for about five years (1654-58), when, under pressure of a two-fold attack delivered by the Koch king, Pran Narayan, from the west, and the Ahom king, Jayadhvaj Singh, from the east, he left his charge and withdrew to Dacca.

No fresh troubles appear to have broken out between the Mughals and the Assamese till the outbreak of the War of Succession. In Assam, the reigning king Jayadhvaj Singh, had his hands too full in quelling internal conspiracies and putting down the recalcitrant hill-tribes—the Nagas and the Miris, to think of disturbing the peaceful relation with the neighbouring foreigners, while in Bengal, Prince Shah Shuja's long period of viceroyalty (1639-47, 1650-1658) was more profitably occupied with the introduction of financial reforms and architectural achievements than with ambitious wars of conquest. Moreover, the rapid changes in the personnel of the Kamrup government so weakened its position as to preclude the possibility of a quarrel with the powerful Ahom king.

Pacific relation with Assam not broken during their regime.

In accordance with the policy of reciprocal amity and good feeling, a friendly mission from the Mughal government visited Assam in 1647, with suitable presents for the reigning king.† A year later, the Mughal *faujdar* at Gauhati, sent messages of congratulation, along with presents, to king Jayadhvaj Singh, on his accession to the throne.‡ This state of peace and friendship lasted for a decade more, till

Visit of friendly missions at the Court of the Assam king (1647-48).

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* *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 115, 222. The Assam *Buranji* of Gunabhiram Barua gives a slightly different list of the *faujdars* of Kamrup of this period—"Aniyar Khan (Allah Yar Khan), Mirza Husain Khan, Zari Mia, Sayyid Husain, Sayyid Kutub, Nathunna (Mir Lutfullah)." The period of their collective rule given there as 26 years, tallies roughly with that given by the author of the *Purani Asama Buranji*.

† *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

‡ *Ibid* : Gait's History of Assam, p. 125.

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the War of Succession in Mughal India precipitated a recurrence of hostilities. *

With the advent of the War of Succession, the review of Mughal relation with Assam, during the reign of Shah Jahan, practically comes to an end. The immediate influence of the fratricidal war on the history of Kamrup, and the great changes it subsequently gave rise to in the Ahom-Mughal politics, will form the subject of the next chapter.

The War of Succession in its relation to the Ahom-Mughal politics.

* In Gait's "Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam," p.4, there is a reference to an inscription, discovered on a stone at Phatasil Duar (Gauhati), commemorating the great defeat inflicted by the Bar Phukan on the Muslmans, in *Saka* 1570 (1648 A. D.). If the date of this inscription is correct, it would indicate that the Ahoms had a passage of arms with the Mughals near Gauhati, early in the reign of Jayadhvaj Singh. In view of the unanimous silence of Persian authors and the Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis* on this point, as well as the peculiar political condition of the time already explained, such an outbreak of warfare appears to be improbable.

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CHAPTER VII.

CLIMACTERIC OF MUGHAL NORTH-EAST FRONTIER POLICY—IMPERIALISM AT ITS ACME AND ITS SHARP DECLINE.

Section I. Mughal Policy towards Koch Bihar (1658—1711). *

Changes in Mughal north-east frontier policy in Aurangzib's reign.

The reign of Emperor Aurangzib witnessed momentous changes in the history of Mughal north-east frontier policy. After the lapse of about half a century, there was a relapse of the imperialistic fever in the body-politic of Mughal India. Under the auspices of Mir Jumla, an exceedingly able, ambitious and trusty Imperial officer, a deliberately aggressive policy, concealed under the thin garb of restitution of legitimate rights and prestige, was launched in the north-

* The original authorities on this topic are few. Of the Persian chronicles of Aurangzib's time, Mirza Muhammad Kazim's *Alamgirnamah*, which covers only the first decade of the reign, deals with Mir Jumla's Koch Bihar campaign in great detail. It has also given a good account of the country of Koch Bihar and of the manners and customs of the people there. The *Masir-i-Alamgiri* of Muhammad Saki Mustaid Khan, contains the history of the reign of Aurangzib till his death. The *Masir* has some references to Assam affairs, but is silent with regard to Koch Bihar. Muhammad Hasim Khafi Khan in his *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, gives details only of Mir Jumla's Koch Bihar campaign (Elliot's History of India, Vol. VII. pp. 264-65, 267-68). The *Tarikh-i-Mufazzali* of Mufazzal Khan also refers to Mir Jumla's Koch campaign (Elliot, Vol. VII. p 144). But, by far the most exhaustive account of the Koch Bihar campaign of Mir Jumla is given by Shihabu-d din Talish in the *Fathiyah-i-Ibriyah*. The author accompanied Mir Jumla in his Koch Bihar and Assam campaigns, and thus could speak with personal knowledge. His account is on the same general lines as that of the *Alamgirnamah*. The *Riyazu-s Salatin* of Ghulam Hussain has some details about the relation of the Mughals with Koch Bihar, during this period, mostly on the basis of the earlier Persian works mentioned already. The contemporary European writers. *e. g.*, Tavernier, Bernier and Manucci are of no use in our study of the Koch-Mughal politics of the last three quarters of the seventeenth century, though an unnamed Dutch sailor, who participated in Mir Jumla's Assam campaign, makes a stray reference to his conquest of "Kosbia" (Koch Bihar).

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eastern frontier. Koch Bihar, a vassal state, was conquered and annexed to the Imperial domain, Kamrup was recovered, and this was followed by a gigantic attempt to extend the bounds of Mughal India to its natural frontier up to the Himalayas in the north-east, at the cost of the Ahom state. Mughal imperialism may now be said to have reached its acme.

Notwithstanding its initial success, the aggressive policy was bound to fail. The inordinate territorial greed of the Mughal Emperor soon recoiled on his own head. The north-east frontier policy again turned defensive, but it was too late to mend, and it ultimately ended in a fiasco.

The sweeping changes in Mughal policy are well illustrated in Koch Bihar history. After a few months' occupation, the Koch state was recovered by its king, Pran Narayan, who retained it in vassalage till his death. Meantime the Assam campaign had ended in a disaster, and this necessitated a revision in Imperial policy. It is curious to note that while the Mughals adopted once more a purely defensive attitude as regards Assam, they at the same time initiated a policy of morbid territorial exploitation at the expense of the anarchic and defenceless state of Koch Bihar, then under the weak successors of Pran Narayan. One by one, the outlying districts in the south and the west were annexed to the Imperial domain without much ado, and the climax was reached in 1711, when the territories of Boda, Patgram and Purba Bhag were seized, but were restored on condition of the payment of (additional) tribute, and Koch Bihar was reduced practically to its present small dimensions.

Well illustrated in Koch Bihar history of this period.

In 1657, the aged Mughal Emperor fell sick at Delhi, and there began at once a scramble for succession amongst his four sons. Prince Shuja, the second son, who had been viceroy in Bengal for some years past, set out with all the troops at his disposal to contest the throne. The frontier garrisons at Ghoraghat were consequently weakened. Taking advantage of the weak state

The War of Succession and its bearing on Koch-Mughal politics—Koch king Pran Narayan rebels.

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of the Mughal frontier in the north-east, Pran Narayan made a series of plundering raids into the Ghoraghat region, carrying off a number of Imperial subjects. He now openly bade defiance to the Mughals, stopped payment of tribute and set himself up as an independent king *

Not satisfied with this assumption of independent status, Pran Narayan made a bold bid for regaining the long-lost political supremacy over Kamrup region. He at first tried peaceful measures. He made overtures to Durlava Narayan (son of Uttama Narayan), zamindar of Budhnagar, and a vassal of the Mughal Emperor, to make common cause with him in overthrowing alien government in Kamrup. But Durlava Narayan refused to listen to Pran Narayan and retorted that he was also a tributary king, with equal rights and privileges, and so would not be bullied by him. Foiled in his peaceful negotiations, Pran Narayan sent his trusted *vizier* Bhabanath to capture Durlava Narayan, and occupy his territories. The unfortunate Raja was soon expelled from his domain and compelled to seek shelter with the Ahom king. †

Attacks Kamrup and takes possession of a fellow-vassal-Durlava Narayan's territory.

Meantime the news of the expulsion of Durlava Narayan and the conquest of his territories by Pran Narayan, reached Mir Lutfulla, the Mughal commandant at Gauhati. The latter remonstrated with Pran Narayan against the illegal usurpation of his fellow vassal's domain, and asked him to vacate it. But he was in no mood to abide by the orders of the Mughal *faujdar*. The latter was soon compelled to send his son against the refractory Raja. In the scuffle that ensued, the Mughals were defeated, and their commander retreated hastily to Gauhati. For a moment Pran

And repels an attempt of the Mughals to dislodge him therefrom.

* *Fathiya*, pp. 6-7 : *Alamgirnamah*, p. 676.

† *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* ; *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 115.

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Narayan was triumphant. His *vizier* Bhabanath advanced to Hajo, which he easily occupied. *

The occupation of Kamrup region up to Hajo by the Koch Bihar king, excited the ill-will and jealousy of the Ahom ruler, and at once set him on his feet. What with the pecular geographical position, blocking the path of natural expansion of their respective domains, what with the persistently hostile trend of their post political relations, the Koch and the Ahom monarchs were thrown poles asunder and there was no love lost between them.

Koch *vizier* Bhabanath's capture of Hajo excites the jealousy of the Ahom king.

While the open rupture between Pran Narayan and his suzerain—the Mughal Emperor, was an event not at all unwelcome to the Ahom king, the substitution of Koch authority for the Mughal, in his immediate neighbourhood, could hardly be looked upon with complacence. The growing pretensions of the Koch king to Kamrup must be stopped and the traditional enemy nipped in the bud. The Ahom king accordingly girded up his loins to prevent Pran Narayan from securing a permanent hold on Kamrup. He assembled a large army, made bridges over the river Kalang, and sent the Bar Phukan and a Rajkhowa towards Gauhati.

The Ahom monarch resolves to oust the Koch king from Kamrup.

The Imperial *faujdar* at Gauhati was now placed in an awkward position. He was threatened with a two-fold attack—from the west by Pran Narayan, and from the east by the Ahom king. In the absence of sufficient forces to check the invaders, he thought it safe to escape with the Imperial fleet to Jahangirnagar (Dacca), leaving Kamrup to be the bone of contention between the Koches and the Assamese. When the latter arrived at Gauhati, they found it already vacated. The place was easily occupied,

Faced with two-fold attack, the Mughal *faujdar* evacuates Kamrup, and the Ahoms occupy Gauhati.

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 115-16.

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and 140 horses, 20 big guns, 200 small guns, besides other materials fell into the hands of the Assamese (1658 A. D.).

The Mughals having withdrawn from Kamrup, the two old enemies—the Koch Bihar Raja and the Ahom king, now stood face to face with each other. * And hostilities between the two were only a question of time. † Securely posted at Hajo, the Koch *vizier* Bhabanath demanded from the Bar Phukan at Gauhati, the surrender of the fugitive Durlava Narayan. The Bar Phukan refused to hand over his protege. ‡ So warfare between the two sides began. § Bhabanath could not occupy Hajo for long. The Ahoms attacked him there, and after a week's struggle, compelled him to retreat from that place. The next engagement took place at the fort of "Akrungkusi". ‖ The struggle for the possession of the fort was hard. "Aniradh", son of Bhabanath, fell in battle. The Koches at last gave up

Warfare between Koch *vizier* Bhabanath and the Ahoms ending in the victory of the latter.

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* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 116 : *Fathiyah*, pp. 6-7 : *Alamgirnamah*, pp. 677-79.

† According to the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*, Pran Narayan now wanted to enter into some sort of negotiations with the Ahom king. Gait (History of Assam, p. 127) tells us that an offensive and defensive alliance and also a partition of the Kamrup territory were proposed by Pran Narayan. Prof. Sarkar (History of Aurangzib, Vol. III. p. 177) reproduces Gait's statements with regard to the alliance. I have not come across any such definite terms of compromise. The *Purani Asama Buranji*, the *Fathiya* and the *Alamgirnamah* are all silent on the point. The peace proposals, if there were any, came to naught. The Ahom king apparently refused to come to terms.

‡ *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 116.

§ The Mughal historians do not explain the origin of the Koch-Ahom conflict, nor do they give its details. The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Purani Asama Buranji* come to our aid here. But the detailed account with regard to the engagements betweeen the Koches and Ahoms, as given in these *Buranjis*, is rather confusing.

‖ Kamrup Village Directory, p. 2 locates Angrakuchi as a village in Pakoa *mauza*, *thanah*, Nalbari.

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the post and took shelter in fort "Babalia". * Driven thence, Bhabanath crossed the Manas river and tried to make a stand at Bishnupur, but failed. A great many guns, horses and swords were secured as booty by the Ahoms.

Raja Pran Narayan now appeared once again on the scene, and attacked the brother of the Mughal commandant of Kamrup who had taken refuge in Dhubri. The latter fled, leaving it in the hands of Pran Narayan. But the Ahoms would give the Koch king no respite. He was soon dislodged from Dhubri, which was then occupied by them. In an engagement at fort "Kunga", † the Koches were worsted, and were soon driven across the Sankosh to their own domain, leaving Kamrup at the mercy of Ahoms, who soon stretched their power up to Hatsilah. ‡

Futile occupation of Dhubri by Pran Narayan followed by the Ahom conquest of Kamrup.

The dream of Pran Narayan to recover that portion of his ancestral domain which lay to the east of the Sankosh in Kamrup, was now rudely dispelled. His position at that moment was critical. He had rebelled against his suzerain, lost the sympathy of his kinsman and had quarrelled with the Ahom king. Absolutely friendless, he was soon to suffer the consequences of his own folly.

The struggle for succession to the throne amongst the four sons of Shah Jahan, which enabled Pran Narayan to overthrow Mughal supremacy for a time, ended in Aurangzib's success. He was formally invested with royal power in June, 1659. Next year, Khan Khanan Mir Jumla was appointed governor of Bengal and sent to Jahangirnagar, with orders to "punish the lawless

Aurangzib's assumption of Imperial power followed by Mir Jumla's appointment as viceroy of Bengal.

* Kamrup Village Directory, p. 18 mentions Bhebla in Chapaguri *mauza*, *thanah* Bajali : the *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 117 terms the post as "Chapaguri".

† Goalpara Village Directory, p. 28 locates Kowhagi in Ghulla *mauza*, *thanah* Dhubri.

‡ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 117-18.

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zamindars of the province." The new Bengal viceroy was determined to stamp out sedition and disloyalty with an iron hand. He accordingly made vast preparations for an expedition against Koch Bihar and Assam. "The time for retribution had arrived."

Koch Bihar enterprise of Mir Jumla—its significance.

The Koch Bihar expedition of Mir Jumla marked the most crucial moment in the history of Koch-Mughal politics. It was really a turning point in the history of Koch Bihar state, when, after a period of independent tenure for nearly three quarters of a century and of faithful vassalage for half a century more, its very existence was threatened by the suzerain power. The event was of great import in the history of Mughal north-east frontier policy as well. There was a recrudescence of the policy of aggressive imperialism after the lapse of nearly half a century, and Koch Bihar, as before, was its first victim.

Its real origin and nature.

To a superficial observer, the origin of the Koch-Mughal conflict of 1660-61 would seem to lie in a bold and definite challenge of Pran Narayan to overthrow the Imperial suzerainty and power in north-eastern India. But the real origin is to be traced elsewhere. It is rather to be found in a scheme of deliberate territorial aggression, evolved by the Bengal viceroy Mir Jumla, with the tacit consent and approval of his crafty, suspicious, and ever-jealous master Aurangzib. In fact, the Koch Bihar expedition appears to have been only the first stage in the grandiose policy of armed imperialism which culminated in the meteoric conquest of Assam. In other words, it was but the inevitable and ominous prologue to the historic drama, of which the Assam enterprise was the tragic epilogue. *

* Though no direct proof is adducible, there can hardly be any doubt that the Koch Bihar expedition was something more than a mere punitive campaign for putting down a refractory vassal. Mir Jumla's gigantic war-preparations, his stern refusal of the pardon sought by the penitent Koch vassal, as well as his

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Though the innate offensive nature of the Koch campaign admits of little doubt, the rebellious activities of Pran Narayan offered a plausible *casus belli* to Mir Jumla. They served to hide his real attitude and gave a defensive colour to the whole enterprise. The energetic and ambitious Koch ruler, fully determined to shake off Mughal tutelage, indulged in a series of aggressive actions against the sovereign authority. He ceased to pay tribute and made plundering raids into the frontier districts in Ghoraghat. He then sought to induce an obedient vassal in Kamrup to join him, and when the latter refused compliance, he attacked and took possession of his territories. The remonstrances of the local Mughal official at Gauhati were treated with scorn. A small picket that was sent against him was easily defeated and the Imperial authority in Kamrup was for a moment totally lost. The only punishment for such an act of open rebellion and aggression on the part of a vassal king, was, in the opinion of the autocratic and ambitious Mughal viceroy, the forfeiture of his kingdom. So he was firmly determined to invade Koch Bihar and annex it permanently to the Delhi Empire.

And occasion.

After enjoying a precarious independence of about four years, Pran Narayan, the Koch king, was faced with an alarming situation. The news of Aurangzib's final triumph, the appointment of the new Bengal viceroy and his gigantic military preparations for the impending Koch campaign, thoroughly unnerved him. He soon perceived his own helplessness and thought it wise to redeem his past misdeed by submitting to the Mughal Emperor again. He sent an envoy to Mir Jumla, craving pardon for his disloyalty and open hostility. But rebellion is contagious, and the deliberate defiance of authority by a vassal king requires exemplary punishment. The Bengal viceroy would listen to

Pran Narayan's futile attempt to stay off Mughal attack on Koch Bihar.

persistent attempt at the retention of Koch Bihar, as a part and parcel of the Mughal Empire—all seem to belie the latter theory.

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no excuses. He imprisoned the envoy, and ordered Raja Sujan Singh and Mirza Beg, with an Imperial corps and a thousand horsemen, to march against Koch Bihar. *

Imperial officer Sujan Singh's futile march to Koch Bihar.

Sujan Singh advanced to the fortified gate-way of Yak Duar (May-June, 1661), but did not proceed further. He halted there for the rains, and, in view of the superior strength of the enemy, applied for reinforcements. This dilatoriness on his part, led the energetic Bengal *subahdar* to take the field in person.

Mir Jumla attacks the Koch realm in person.

On the 1st of November, 1661, Mir Jumla started from Jahangirnagar, with ten to twelve thousand cavalry, numerous infantry (30000 according to the *Buranjis*) and a powerful flotilla of war-boats. The Nawab first marched to Baritalah (an Imperial outpost on the right bank of the Brahmaputra, opposite to Hatsilah in the Kari Bary region), the harem and the heavy luggage having already been sent by way of Ghoraghat. There he had to decide upon his route of march to Koch Bihar. The capital city, with some of its *parganahs*, was encircled by a *bandh* or *al* on all sides, with fortified gate-ways set in it, which rendered the place almost impregnable. The Mughal viceroy showed his sagacity in selecting the way of approach to his goal. He avoided the two well-known paths *e. g.*, the Yak Duar and the other by way of Khonthaghat, and determined to enter Koch Bihar by an obscure and neglected highway. The *al* on that side was less broad and high than on the other sides, but the way having been covered with dense bamboo groves all along, the Koch Raja thought it to be an inconvenient route and did not adequately guard it, thus enabling the Mughals to march with little opposition to his capital.

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* With regard to the details of the Koch Bihar campaign, the *Fathiya* (pp. 8-9, 10-18) and the *Alamgirnamah* (pp. 683-93) are our only authorities. Strangely enough, the *Buranjis* are entirely silent here.

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On the 13th December, 1661, the Imperial army reached the foot of the *al.* Then began a difficult march through jungles. At a place three stages from the capital city, the news of its desertion by the Koch king and of his flight to the Bhutan Hills, reached the Mughal viceroy. In six days, his army marched to the capital and occupied it without any trouble (19th December, 1661).

The Koch king takes to flight with his *vizier*, leaving Mir Jumla an easy victor.

But the fall of the capital did not mean the subjugation of the kingdom. The Koch king had not been defeated in a decisive battle, but had voluntarily withdrawn himself, to await a suitable opportunity for coming back. According to his instructions, his *vizier* Bhabanath sought shelter, with 5 to 6000 soldiers, in the dense jungles skirting the Morang Hills, and there made preparations to harass the conqueror by a guerilla warfare. Above all, the general populace, which did not join the king in his flight, offered stubborn resistance to Mir Jumla.

The politic and humane treatment of the Mughal viceroy overcame popular opposition. The customary plunder and ravage of the conquered territory were strictly forbidden; the property and honour of the subject people were assured protection, and the indiscretions of the Mughal soldiers were severely checked. This generous treatment encouraged the Koch people to put down their arms and submit to Mir Jumla. "Bishan Narayan," son of the Koch king, who was on bad terms with his father, also submitted and was honoured with a *khelat.* *

Mir Jumla overcomes popular opposition by humane treatment.

* The *Fathiya* tells us that the son of the Raja turned a Muhammadan, while the *Alamgirnamah* and the *Rajopakhyan* are silent on the point. Again, there is some confusion with regard to the name of the Koch Prince. The *Rajopakhyan*, p. 53 says that the first son of Maharaja Pran Narayan was "Vishnu Narayan", who died not long after his father's assumption of royal power. The Mughal invasion of Koch Bihar took place in 1661—full 28 years after Pran Narayan's accession to the throne. How can Vishnu Narayan be living at that time?

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Master of the capital city, the Bengal viceroy turned his attention towards the capture of the fugitive Raja and his *vizier* Bhabanath. Isfandiar Beg, who had a knowledge of the peculiarities of the country, was sent with Farhad Khan towards Morang to capture Bhabanath. Isfandiar, after a vigorous search, seized him, with his son and wife and some followers. Another party was sent to Kanthalbari, at the foot of the Bhutan Hills, to hunt down the Koch king. But he could not be captured. Getting scent of his pursuers, he reached the top of the Hills and was given asylum by Dharma Raja, the ascetic king of that region. Mir Jumla sent an envoy, requesting the Bhutan Raja to hand over the fugitive or to drive him away from his realm. The Raja refused to do either. Secure in his mountain-fastness which was inaccessible to the Mughal cavalry, he could easily reject the peremptory proposal. Mir Jumla on his part, eager to proceed towards Assam and check the growing pretensions of its king, was in no mood to take up arms against the Bhutan king, so as to compel him to give up his protege. He left him alone, and soon marched to Assam.

His further activities in Koch Bihar followed by speedy departure for Assam.

Before his departure, Mir Jumla made elaborate arrangements for the administration of the conquered territory. Henceforward Koch Bihar was to form a part and parcel of the Imperial domain. Isfandiar, now titled Isfandiar Khan, was appointed to officiate as *faujdar* of the region, with 400 cavalry and 1000 matchlockmen, till the arrival of the permanent incumbent, Askar Khan. Qazi Samui was appointed as *diwan*, and two other Muhammadans were made *amins* for carrying on territorial adjustments of the conquered region. The name of the capital city was changed to Alamgirnagar in honour of the reigning king. The fortifications of the

Administrative arrangement of the Koch country during his absence.

It may be, the Mughal historian has made a confusion with regard to the name of the Koch Bihar Prince, and has mentioned "Bishan Narayan" in place of "Vasudeva Narayan," the third son of Pran Narayan.

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gate-way of Yak Duar were levelled with the ground, and an open space, 100 yards wide, was made by cutting down jungles from both sides. An officer was posted to Kanthalbari to intercept the return of the fugitive king.

The Koch Bihar campaign of Mir Jumla was a great military success. By marching along an obscure and inaccessible road, he took the Koches completely by surprise, and captured the well-fortified capital city without any opposition. The whole affair was over in a week's time, and Koch Bihar, deserted by its king, lay at the mercy of the victor. But the political results of this invasion were short-lived. Mir Jumla had no time to consolidate his conquest, and the kingdom slipped away from his hands within five months of its occupation.

Results of the Koch Bihar campaign of Mir Jumla transitory.

The reasons for the speedy expulsion of the Mughals from Koch Bihar are detailed by Shihabu-d din. After the departure of Mir Jumla, the Mughal officers sought to introduce an innovation in the time-honoured land-assessment of the country. This was opposed by the subject people, who rose in rebellion. The Imperial garrison at the capital city was too weak to meet an infuriated populace in arms : yet there was no hope of reinforcement from Mir Jumla. For, with the advent of the rains, the Mughal army in Assam was reduced to a sad plight. The fortified posts were isolated by rain and flood, and all communication between the fleet and the land army was cut off. Taking advantage of this situation, the Koch Bihar king got down from his mountain asylum and reached his capital, where he was welcomed by his subjects, sick of foreign domination. The Imperial officer at Kanthalbari was killed, and all supplies to the garrison at the capital were cut off. Finding it impossible to stay on, Isfandiar, with his men, left Koch Bihar for Ghoraghat, where Askar Khan soon followed him. *

Reasons for the speedy expulsion of the Mughals from Koch Bihar.

* *Fathiya*, p. 80.

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The bug-bear of foreign domination was now removed, and Koch Bihar again got back its independence (May, 1661). All the subsequent plans of Mir Jumla to recover it in person proved futile. The stress and strain of the Assam expedition shattered his health, and he was compelled to move back to Jahangirnagar under medical advice, but died before reaching it (16th March, 1663).

Futile attempts of Mir Jumla to recover the country.

Four days before his death, Mir Jumla had appointed Askar Khan to renew hostile operations against Koch Bihar, with a view to regaining possession of it. But his death introduced a change in the Bengal government, which affected the success of the enterprise. Askar Khan was apparently left outside the Koch kingdom with a small force, with orders to recover it. * He needed strong and speedy reinforcements. But the officiating Bengal viceroy, Daud Khan, was remiss in sending them. All that Askar Khan was able to do was, "to confirm his possession of the *chakla* of Fathpur outside the wall (*al*) of Koch Bihar, which had been seized by the Mughals early in the war." †

In 1664, Shaista Khan became viceroy of Bengal. He ruled for more than twenty years, with a short break (1677-1680). Shaista Khan was an experienced and capable administrator as well as a veteran general. He was determined to carry to a successful conclusion the half-finished work of Mir Jumla. In the month of March, the new *subahdar* reached Rajmahal, and announced his design to conquer Koch Bihar on his way to the capital. ‡

Mir Jumla's successor Shaista Khan attempts to reconquer Koch Bihar.

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* *Fathiya*, pp. 168, 170-71.

† *Fathiya*, *Continuation*, p. 110 b : Prof. Sarkar's History of Aurangzib, Vol. III. p. 218. With the death of Mir Jumla, the *Fathiya* comes to an end. The *Alamgirnamah* and the other contemporary Persian works do not tell us what success attained Askar Khan's attempts to recapture the Koch kingdom. It is only in the *Continuation* of Shihabu-d din's work, Bodleian MS., discovered by Prof. Sarkar, that we find a reference to this topic.

‡ The *Alamgirnamah* and the other well-known authorities are silent also about Koch affairs during Shaista Khan's long regime. The *Riyaz* and

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The news of this decision must have alarmed the Koch king. The tactlessness of the local Mughal officials, a natural dislike for alien rule, Pran Narayan's personal popularity, and, above all, a favourable turn of circumstances (Mir Jumla's disastrous Assam campaign followed by his sudden demise) had so far enabled him to continue to defy Mughal power and persist in his career of precarious independence. He had now to choose between another invasion of his realm and final submission to the Mughal Emperor. As Pran Narayan's last days were embittered by his own sickness and internal dissensions, he thought it prudent to save his kingdom by choosing the latter course. Further, he offered to pay a sum of five *lakhs* and a half in a few instalments, as war-indemnity to the Bengal viceroy. Shaista Khan, on his part, was very eager to chastise the ruler of Arrakan, so as to set a limit to the Magh depredations in lower Bengal. He at once agreed to the terms offered by the Koch king. The Mughal army accordingly was ordered to withdraw from the Koch frontier as soon as two instalments of money were paid. "The tribute of the Koch king reached the Imperial Court on the 6th December, 1665'." * Thus, after a short spell of independence, Koch Bihar once again became a vassal state.

Pran Narayan, who is alarmed, reaffirms his vassalage and disarms Shaista Khan with a heavy war-indemnity.

A few months after this event (early in 1666), Pran Narayan died. His name deserves honourable mention in the history of Koch Bihar kingdom. Both from the standpoint of internal development as well as of foreign relation, his reign was really

Death of Pran Narayan.

Stewart's History and the *Buranjis* follow suit. The *Fathiyah, Continuation,* (1663-1666) p. 121b, the R. A. S. MS. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Muala,* 8th year, 14, Isar Das's *Fatuhat-i-Alamgiri,* B. M. MS. p. 123a, and the *Rajopakhyan,* pp. 61-62 help us in our review of Mughal relation with Koch Bihar during Shaista Khan's Bengal viceroyalty.

* *Fathiya, Continuation,* p. 121b, : *Akhbarat,* 8th year, 14, History of Aurangzib, Vol. III. p. 218.

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the golden age in the annals of Koch Bihar. It is a pity that the official Koch chronicle (the *Rajopakhhan*) is very brief with regard to his reign and is entirely silent about his chequered relation with the Mughals.

The disappearance of Pran Narayan marks a turning point in the fortunes of the Koch kingdom. From this time forward till the end of the 17th century, the history of Koch Bihar is one long tale of slow but steady disintegration, in which bloody struggles for succession, misgovernment, rebellions of prominent state-officials and foreign invasions all play their part. A new phase in Mughal relation with Koch Bihar is soon discernible. The suzerain power is no longer satisfied with the annual tribute from the vassal state, but is anxious to reduce it to its smallest dimensions. In fact, a policy of aggressive imperialism, explicit in a deliberate attempt at territorial expansion, was again evolved. The weakness of the central power and the rebellious tendency of the prominent state officials, offered the Mughals a good opportunity for extending their sway over the southern and eastern portions of the Koch Bihar kingdom, till its dismemberment was completed by the first quarter of the 18th century.

And its effect on the history of Koch-Mugal politics—evolution of a new phase of aggressive imperialism therein.

The task of carrying out the new policy was delayed, however, till the last years of Shaista Khan's government. The reason is not far to seek. The long regime of Shaista Khan was mostly occupied with the task of suppression of the Arrakan pirates, quarrel with the English East India Company, as well as with internal administrative reforms. He could not possibly find time to lead an expedition into Koch Bihar in person, thus giving effect to the new imperialistic policy. The disturbed political condition in Bengal explains why Koch Bihar enjoyed a respite from the inroads of the Mughals for about 20 years (1666-1685).

New Mughal policy not carried into effect until the lapse of two decades—its reasons.

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In Koch Bihar, Pran Narayan was succeeded by his son Mod Narayan, who ruled the kingdom for 15 years (1666-80) as a puppet king, real power having been exercised by Mahi Narayan (Pran Narayan's uncle) and his sons. The *Rajopakhyan* informs us, "The king was troubled by internal dissensions and the kingdom was not properly governed." * The next king was Vasudeva Narayan, who ruled the country only for two years (1680-1682).

Koch Bihar history during this period—a tale of misgovernment and civil war.

It was during the reign of Vasudeva's successor, Mahendra Narayan—the great-grand-son of Pran Narayan, that the new Mughal policy was sought to be put into action. It was really an opportune moment. The political situation had considerably improved in Bengal. On the other hand, the new Koch Raja being only five years old, Jagat Narayan and Jajna Narayan, the two surviving sons of the *nazir* Mahi Narayan, constantly disturbed the peace of the kingdom and oppressed the people. The ministers of state were powerless to oppose them. Taking advantage of this weakness of the royal power and the consequent political confusion, the Mughals now carried on aggressive expeditions against Koch Bihar.

No systematic and authoritative account of these invasions is available. † Prof. Sarkar ‡ refers to a campaign against Koch Bihar in 1685. He tells us, on the authority of the historian Isardas (123a.), that about 1685, Bhabanidas, son of Todar Mal and a deputy of the viceroy of Bengal, seized the capital of Koch Bihar and expelled the Raja, but that he perished with his entire army of 4000 cavalry in a fire, and the Raja then recovered his city.

The Mughals invade Koch Bihar during Mahendra Narayan's rule—in 1685.

* *Rajopakhyan*, p, 56.

† The *Fathiyah*, *Continuation*, ends with the conquest of Chittagong by Shaista Khan's son in 1666. The standard Bengal histories—the *Riyaz* and Stewart's book do not help us. The *Rajopakhyan* refers to an invasion of Koch Bihar during Ibrahim Khan's Bengal viceroyalty, but is silent with regard to any campaign in Shaista Khan's regime.

‡ History of Aurangzib, Vol. III. p. 219.

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Another Mughal incursion into the Koch kingdom is mentioned by Mr. H. N. Chowdhury, * "In the Bengali year 1194 (1687 A.D.), the Mughals, under the leadership of Ebadat Khan, advanced from Ghoraghat and seized upon district after district, belonging to Koch Bihar. Jajna Narayan, the only surviving son of Mahi Narayan, who was appointed Chhatra Nazir as an emergent measure, opposed the Muhammadans, but without any effect. They occupied the three central chaklas of Fatepur, Karjihat and Kakina without any difficulty." †

And again in 1687.

Two years after the campaign of 1687, Shaista Khan resigned the Bengal viceroyalty and was succeeded by Ibrahim Khan. The latter held office from 1689 to 1696, and, during this period, the policy of territorial dismemberment of the Koch state was consistently followed.

Shaista Khan succeeded by Ibrahim Khan.

In Koch Bihar, the same king Mahendra Narayan was ruling. There was the same weakness and confusion in the state. To make matters worse, prominent officials here and there assumed independence, and sought to perpetuate it under the ægis of the Mughal suzerainty. The *Rajopakhyan* (pp. 60-61) alone, amongst the authorities, gives a graphic account of the miserable state of affairs—"Men in charge of the parganas in the southern portion of the kingdom revolted against the king's authority, and paying some small tribute to Ibrahim Khan, the subahdar of Dacca, and his son Zabardast Khan, attached themselves to the Faujdar of Ghoraghat. The

Rebellion of Koch state officials in collusion with the Mughals.

* Cooch Bihar State and its Land Revenue Settlements, p. 240.

† The expeditions of 1685 and 1687 against Koch Bihar do not find a place either in the original Persian works or in the *Rajopakhyan*, the *Riyaz* and Stewart's History. Mr. Chowdhury moreover has not referred to his sources of information with regard to the campaign of 1687. The account of these inroads thus stands uncorroborated. But when we remember the weakness of the Koch central power and the rebellious tendency of the

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Raikat at Baikunthapur, and the Konwars of Panga now paid tribute to the subahdar."

The necessity for putting an end to the rebellion of state officials and for checking the inroads of the Mughals was brought home to the young king, who appointed Jajna Narayan to the command of the Koch army. The Bhutias now rendered help to the Koches. In the encounters that followed, the Mughals gained success and annexed a large part of the Koch kingdom to their empire. The *Rajopakhyan* (pp. 61-62) says, "Jajna Narayan having become commander-in-chief, began a war against the Mahomedans. In some places very severe battles were fought. At Patgram the Mahomedans killed a number of the king's troops ... The royal troops slew a number of Mahomedans in the eastern part of the Raj. With the destruction of the great number of troops, the kingdom began to decay. The Mahomedans could not be overcome. They subjugated the country as far as Boda, Patgram and Purbba Bhag..." Jajna Narayan died in 1681, but the struggle went on. "For two years (1691-1693), the *Rajopakhyan* goes on, "there had been constant fighting in Boda and Patgram and many people had been slain. The officers in charge of Karjihat, Kakina, Tepa, Manthanajhori and other parganas, becoming unfaithful to their trust, made themselves the owners of the land, consenting to pay an annual tribute to the subahdar and obtained sannuds." This was followed by the death of Mahendra Narayan in 1693.

Renewed Koch-Mughal warfare (1691-93).

The reign of Mahendra Narayan which thus ended in ignominy and chaos, was the most unfortunate in the annals of the Koch kingdom. Pursuant to the policy of aggressive expansion, the Mughals led a series of expeditions against the state, distracted by civil war and weakened by maladministration. Within a few years, the central *chaklas* of Fatepur, Karjihat and Kakina were occupied.

Koch Bihar at the time of the death of king Mahendra Narayan.

prominent state officials of this period, it does not appear to be unreasonable to assume that the incidents of 1685 and 1687 are true history

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By 1693, the Mughals succeeded in subjugating the country as far as Boda, * Patgram † and Purbba Bhag.

Far-reaching social and political consequences of the repeated Mughal inroads.

The continued triumph of the Mughals had important and far-reaching social and political consequences. It shook the fabric of the decadent Koch state to its very foundation. The protracted warfare told heavily upon the man-power and the material resources of Koch Bihar, and hastened its decline. Further, it stimulated all the more the rebellious tendencies of the prominent state officials, who gradually carved out separate principalities for themselves, under the protection of the Mughal power.

Last Mughal attack upon Koch Bihar during Rup Narayan's reign.

The *parganahs* of Boda, Patgram and Purbba Bhag, which could not be taken during Mahendra Narayan's time, were occupied during the reign of his successor, Rup Narayan. The *Rajopakhyan* (pp. 64-65) tells us, "The parganas of Boda, Patgram and Purbba Bhag, along with the southern country, had been conquered by the subahdar. Maharaja Rup Narayan undertook his first war, but was unsuccessful. At length he made a treaty with the Nawab Zabardast Khan of Dacca, to the effect that the chaklas of Boda, Patgram and Purbba Bhag should belong to the Maharaja, he paying tribute to the subahdar. It being considered derogatory to the king who had an umbrella and a Pat hasti (and who) could strike coins, to pay tribute direct, the tribute was paid in the name of Shanta Narain, the Nazir, on behalf of the Maharaja.....This settlement was made in the year 1118 (1711 A.D.)." Rup Narayan (1693-1714) was really the last of the kings who had pretensions to rule as the successor of the great Nara Narayan. From his time, the extent of the kingdom was finally curtailed, and the history of Koch-Mughal relation practically comes to a close.

* In Rennell's Map No. V, Boodah *pargunah* occupies the right bank of the Teestah river, south of Bootishazary.

† Patgong is on the left bank of the Teestah to the east of Boodah.

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Section II. Mughal Policy towards Assam (1658-1707). *

(A) Mir Jumla's Assam Campaign.

Aurangzib's reign saw the closing stages of Ahom-Mughal history, characterised by incessant hostility.

The quarter of a century that began with the fatal illness of Emperor Shah Jahan at Delhi, covering half of the long reign of his son Aurangzib, witnessed the closing phases of Mughal north-east frontier policy. The history of this period has a consistency of its own. It is in fact a long-drawn story of an almost continuous struggle between the Mughal empire and the Ahom monarchy. The era of open and undisguised hostility which had begun in the regime of Shah Jahan and had been in suspension during the

* Of the Persian authorities on this topic, the *Alamgirnamah* deserves prominent mention. The author gives a vivid picture, first of the antecedent circumstances of Mir Jumla's Assam war, then of the war itself and its tragic end, incorporating therein a valuable and exhaustive account of the Assam realm, its king and the people. But, with regard to the history of the post-Mir Jumla period, he mentions only one incident and that too barely (the reconquest of Gauhati by the Assamese in December, 1667), so that he is not helpful in connection with the last and the most eventful phases in Ahom-Mughal politics. By far the most authoritative account of Mir Jumla's Assam campaign is furnished by his *waqia-navis*, Shihabu-d din Talish. His work (*Fathiya*) shows general agreement with the *Alamgirnamah*, but is more detailed and exhaustive. It ends with the death of Mir Jumla in 1663, and is therefore of no value for the history of Mughal warfare in Assam for the two decades following it. Khafi Khan offers a detailed story of the Assam campaign, obviously on the basis of the *Alamgirnamah* which he has used in a very careless manner. This detracts much from its historical value. He too is silent with regard to the subsequent phases of Ahom-Mughal history. While the first portion of the *Masir-i-Alamgiri*, written after Aurangzib's death, is merely an abridgment of the *Alamgirnamah*, the scanty notes left in the latter portion of the work are our mainstay (of course from the Mughal standpoint) regarding the almost continuous conflicts with the Assamese, which began four years after Mir Jumla's death. Besides this, bulletins of Aurangzib's reign—the *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Muala*, consisting of different slips of paper, recording each day's occurrences at the Royal Court, guide us occasionally. Some of these slips—those for the 12th and the 13th regnal year, are very useful with regard to Raja Ram Singh's Assam

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last two decades, now revived. It soon reached its climax, but only to close in ignominy and failure for the Mughals, before the first half of the reign of Aurangzib had run out.

Mir Jumla's Assam campaign, its importance.

The crowning event of this age, and in reality its turning point, is the Assam expedition of Mir Jumla. The history of this tragic enterprise has received detailed treatment from more than one scholar in recent times, so that a repetition of the same topic might appear to be uncalled for. But instead of dealing with the campaign in its real setting as the climax of Mughal imperialistic venture in the

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war. Of the later Persian works, the *Masir-ul-umara* gives a biography of Mir Jumla, while the *Riyaz-us-Salatin* refers only to the Assam campaign, leaving us totally in the dark about the affairs subsequent to it.

Amongst the ancient chronicles of Assam which throw light on the period under review, the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Purani Asama Buranji* occupy probably the foremost place. They make no secret of the aggressive attack of the Ahom king Jayadhvaj Singh upon Kamrup, which served as the occasion of Mir Jumla's Assam expedition. Though their treatment of the expedition itself is rather brief and confusing, the *Buranjis* offer the most exhaustive and continuous account, so far available, of the deadly struggle which began subsequently, ending only in the final expulsion of the Mughals from Kamrup. Their real value therefore lies in the fact that they alone enable us to fill up the great gap in the Persian works, regarding the post-Mir Jumla period of Ahom-Mughal history. Of the two leading *Buranjis*, the *Purani Asama Buranji* shows general agreement with the *Ahom Buranji*, but it often gives additional details. Nowhere is this more evident than in the history of the last stage of the warfare in the reign of Gadadhar Singh. It is rather surprising to find that the modern *Buranjis* of Kashinath Phukan and Gunabhiram Barua, based on the earlier works, refer only briefly to Mir Jumla's Assam war as well as to Raja Ram Singh's campaign, followed by the final subversion of Mughal power in Kamrup.

Some contemporary European writers have left interesting accounts of the Assam expedition. Of these, the most valuable is one furnished by an unnamed Dutch sailor, who was pressed into the Mughal navy which saw service in Assam. He speaks from first-hand knowledge, and gives a graphic description of the naval battle above Kaliabar as well as of the outbreak of famine and pestilence in Mughal camp during the rains of 1662, leading to the retreat

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north-east frontier, they have put it rather in a colourless manner, as a mere episode in their special treatises, with the inevitable result that its real character and its far-reaching consequences have not hitherto been properly appreciated. Hence the necessity of treading over the same ground, with a view to bringing out the true nature and upshot of the event.

The Assam campaign of Mir Jumla, a premeditated scheme of imperial conquest, may well be regarded as the grand climacteric in the history of Ahom-Mughal politics and in that of Mughal north-east frontier policy. Ever since the conquest of Kamrup, an extension of Imperial domain in the north-east, at the expense of the neighbouring realm of Assam, had been a favourite item in the foreign policy of the Mughal Emperors. The dismal failure of the Bengal Sultan Alau-d din Husain Shah's Assam enterprise in the past and that of Sayyid Abu Bakr and of Sayyid Zainul-Abidin within living memory, failed to be an eye-opener to the Mughals. Assam, the accursed land of sorcery and magic, of rain and flood and pestilence, with its teeming herd of wild elephants, "chamari" cows and musk-deer, and its varied aromatic plants, gold and silk, exercised an ever increasing fascination upon them, and they now made,

It was the climacteric in Ahom-Mughal history and in that of Mughal north-east frontier policy.

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of the expeditionary force. The treatment of the Assam war by other contemporary Europeans who visited India—Manucci, Bernier and Taverneir, is very brief and is strikingly similar in nature. Of the modern European workers on the field, Dr. Wade follows generally the account of the *Purani Asama Buranji* and has practically nothing to add to it, while Stewart refers only to the Assam campaign, mainly on the basis of the *Riyaz*.

Besides the literary sources, a number of interesting inscriptions (in Persian as well as in Sanskrit) have been discovered, which are of great corroborative value, regarding the protracted struggle of the Assam kings Jayadhvaj Singh, Chakradhvaj Singh and Gadadhar Singh against the Mughals. A few of them are inscribed on mosques, rocks and stones, but those inscribed on cannon are more numerous, and are dated during the regime of the last two kings mentioned above (*vide* Appendix I to Gait's "Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam").

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in fact, the last but the most daring and decisive attempt at its conquest, under the greatest military captain the age produced.

The circumstances which led to the resumption of warfare (after twenty years of unbroken peace), culminating in the attack on Assam, are an interesting study. The reflex influence of the confusion and disorder in central authority, owing to the outbreak of the War of Succession in 1657, was soon felt in the distant north-east frontier of Mughal India, and the energetic and ambitious Koch vassal, Pran Narayan, was not slow to take advantage of the situation. He declared independence and followed it up by a bold attempt to subvert Imperial authority in Kamrup.

Pran Narayan's occupation of Kamrup (1658).

The initial success achieved by the Koch king excited the envy and alarm of the traditional enemy, the ruler of Assam. Determined to prevent Pran Narayan from securing a firm footing in Kamrup, and at the same time anxious for the consolidation of his own power at the cost of the hated foreigners on his west, the Ahom king Jayadhvaj Singh really aimed at killing two birds with one stone, when at the head of a large army, he crossed the Bar Nadi, the recognised boundary of Mughal Kamrup on the east, and advanced towards Gauhati, the captial.

Opposed by the Assam king who marched upon Gauhati forthwith.

Mir Lutfullah of Shiraz, the *faujdar*, being too weak to meet the simultaneous attack of the Koches and the Assamese, hastily fled to Dacca, before the latter had come upon him. To his great joy, the Assam king now found himself an easy master of Gauhati. A contest, short and sharp, ensued for the possession of the rest of the vacant territory. Pran Narayan was dislodged from Hajo as well as from Dhubri, and driven back at last to his own domain to the west of the river Sankosh.

And captured it without a blow, owing to the hasty retreat of the Mughal *faujdar*.

The wildest dreams of the Assam king were now realised. The Mughals had abandoned Kamrup and the Koches had been

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forced to give up their pretensions to it, leaving him in absolute authority. He speedily extended his sway over the whole of the western Brahmaputra valley, established a military station at Hatsilah, near Kari Bary, * and pushed as far south as Sherpur (in the north-western part of the Mymensingh District) and Sri Surjya (northern part of the modern Sylhet), and the latter place was fortified and garrisoned. † Adequate arrangements for the control of the newly conquered tracts were then made. The whole of the Brahmaputra valley, from Sadiya on the east to Sherpur on the south, was thus brought under one sway, and the Ahom state now attained its greatest territorial expansion.

Speedy occupation of entire Brahmaputra valley by the Assam king.

For nearly three years, Jayadhvaj Singh remained in undisputed possession of his new conquests. By June, 1660, the Civil War finally ended in Aurangzib's triumph. The new Mughal Emperor appointed Mir Jumla, his chief lieutenant, to the viceroyalty of Bengal, with orders to punish the rebel elements in that quarter.

New conquests retained till the end of 1660.

Alarmed at the news of the close of the War of Succession and of the arrival in Bengal, of the veteran politician-general, Mir Jumla, the Assam king made a gesture for peace, through an envoy. He laid the whole blame for the subversion of the Mughal authority in Kamrup on the shoulders of Pran Narayan, and pleaded that he had taken possession of the Imperial domain only to prevent it from falling into the hands of his rival. He now signified his desire to withdraw, leaving Kamrup in the hands of the Mughal officials. ‡

Assam king's idle gesture of surrender of Mughal territories to Mir Jumla.

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* *Alamgirnamah*, p. 679 : *Fathiya*, MS., pp. 6-7.

† *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 118.

‡ *Alamgirnamah*, p. 680 : *Fathiya*, MS., pp. 8-9 : *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 119.

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The peace proposals found favour with the Bengal viceroy who was eager to invade Arrakan to punish the Maghs at the end of the rains (1660). He dismissed the Assamese envoy with suitable presents, and deputed Rashid Khan to receive back the Imperial territories. The latter was soon disillusioned and found that the peace manœuvre of the Assamese was only a plea for gaining time to prepare for war. As soon as he reached the vicinity of Hatsilah, their hostile intentions became clear to him. With the help of reinforcements sent by the viceroy from Bengal, Rashid Khan succeeded in wresting Hatsilah and Kari Bary *parganah* from the clutches of the enemy. He then captured Dhubri and moved up to Rangamati.

Follow by a futile opposition to the Mughal officer Rashid Khan sent for taking possession of them.

The speedy advance of the Imperialists along the Brahmaputra valley and the retreat of the Assamese garrisons before them spurred the Assam king to great activity. He punished the delinquent officers, collected a large army and appointed Badali Phukan as the chief commander, with instructions to make a vigorous stand at the fortified stronghold of Jogighopa (near the confluence of the Manas with the Brahamaputra). Another fort south of the Brahmaputra was made on a hill, named Pancharatan, and garrisoned adequately.

The Assam king fortified Jogighopa and Pancharatan forts.

The vast war-preparations of the Assam king unnerved Rashid Khan, who was further dissuaded (owing to the rains having already set in) from proceeding beyond Rangamati, whence he appealed to the Bengal viceroy for fresh reinforcements.

Rashid Khan halted at Rangamati for reinforcement.

Simultaneously with the despatch of Rashid Khan towards Kamrup, Mir Jumla sent Raja Sujan Singh for the punishment of the Koch rebel, Pran Narayan, and the conquest of his kingdom. Sujan Singh too failed to accomplish much and halted for reinforcement. The dilatoriness of his officers, sent

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against the Koch and Assam kings, greatly annoyed the Bengal viceroy, and he hastened to take the field in person. Koch Bihar was the first victim. Instead of consolidating his power there, Mir Jumla started for Assam early in January, 1662.

Mir Jumla personally started to conquer Koch Bihar and Assam.

Thus, after the lapse of almost a quarter of a century, the Mughals and the Assamese once more came into open conflict with one another. The reasons for the resumption of hostilities after such a long time are varied in character. Though the unbounded imperialistic ambition of Mir Jumla to conquer Assam and make it the base of an attack on Burma and China, immortalising his name and fame, remains the dominant motive of the war of 1662-63, other factors also had their part, which must not be overlooked. Greatly anxious to provide some sort of occupation for such an able, energetic and wealthy military leader as Mir Jumla in a foreign war, and thereby get rid, if possible, of the most powerful and dangerous of his friends, the crafty Emperor Aurangzib eloquently impressed upon his viceroy the necessity for an expedition against the rich though dreadful realm of Assam—the grave of many a daring soul in the past. *

Origins of Mir Jumla's Assam campaign discussed.

The unprovoked aggressions of the Assam king served, however, to hide the real designs of the Mughals, and gave a defensive character to the aggressive warfare they launched upon. King Jayadhvaj Singh was undoubtedly guilty of the most flagrant breach of the terms of the treaty of 1639, when he took advantage of the disorder and confusion in Imperial politics to cross the western boundary of

Its real nature aggressive, though hidden under a defensive garb.

* Bernier's Travels (Constable's edition) p. 171 : Niccolao Manucci's *Storia Do Mogor* (Irvine's edition), Vol. II. p. 98 : the unnamed Dutch sailor in Glanius's English rendering—*A relation of an unfortunate voyage to the kingdom of Bengala*, 1681-82, pp. 177-80. (*vide* Bengal Past and Present, Vol. XXIX. pp. 25-26).

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Assam (the river Bar Nadi) into Mughal Kamrup, and carry on, quite unopposed, a plundering campaign throughout its length and breadth, as far as the border of the Bengal capital itself. Mughal authority in Kamrup was wiped out, and the prestige of their arms reduced to the lowest level. For three years, the Kamrup king enjoyed with impunity his ill-gotten gains, and when threatened with retribution for his wrongs, he successfully hoodwinked the Mughal viceroy with a sham peace proposal, while secretly preparing for war. To avenge the insults heaped upon the Mughals by their faithless and cunning friend, to recover Kamrup from the hands of the unscrupulous usurper and re-establish the fame of the Imperial government was certainly an object of great solicitude to Mir Jumla, who more than realised it in his Assam expedition.*

Beginning of the expedition and its personnel.

As the conquest of Koch Bihar had been easy and rapid, Mir Jumla's strength was practically unimpaired, and, with an army consisting of about 12000 cavalry, † 30000 infantry, ‡ and a flotilla of war-vessels, of which the Dutch and the Portuguese led the van, numbering about 323 in all, § he left Koch Bihar on the 4th of January, 1662, and moving by way of Ghoraghat,

* With regard to the details of the Assam war, the accounts of the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Purani Asama Buranji* are extremely confusing, particularly regarding chronology. Nowhere is this more palpable than in connection with the incessant hostilities waged during the rains of 1662. The treatment of the *Fathiyah* and the *Alamgirnamah*, on the other hand, is quite clear and systematic. But as the *Buranjis* corroborate generally the Persian works and sometimes offer us additional details, they are of great value and cannot be left aside. Apparently their confused narrative has led Messrs Gait and Sarkar to ignore them and rely on the Persian chronicles almost exclusively, in regard to the campaign. I have tried to utilise as best as I could both the sources, so as to offer a more systematic and fuller treatment of the topic than has hitherto been done.

† *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 88). *Storia Do Mogor*, Vol. II. p. 98 gives 40000 cavalry. This is too many : the Dutch sailor in Glanius, p. 145, puts in an incredibly large number—300000 horse and 500000 foot.

‡ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

§ *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 73) : Glanius, p. 157.

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reached the Brahmaputra five days later.* The sagacious general ordered the army to march slowly along the bank of the river, clearing the jungles with the help of huge elephants, in close co-operation with the fleet. Dilir Khan, his ablest lieutenant, led the vanguard, Mir Murtaza, the *darogha* of the artillery, was responsible for the path of communication, while the fleet was placed in charge of Ibn Husain, assisted by Jamal Khan, Manawwar Khan and others. The dense jungles and the numerous shallow *nalahs* on the way impeded the march of the army. When at last Rangamati was reached, Rashid Khan joined with his detachment. The whole army then advanced further and halted five miles west of Jogighopa, 40 *kos* distant from Gauhati, on the 17th of January. †

Capture of forts Jogighopa and Pancharatan by the Mughals.

The Assamese fort of Jogighopa commanded a great strategic position, which made it easy to defend but difficult to be stormed. Perched on the top of a high hill, it had the Brahmaputra to the south and the Manas to the west, while the north and the east were fortified by a deep ditch, skirted by dense jungles and small hills. Very thick walls, about two miles in circumference and mounted with guns, surrounded the fort, making it almost impregnable. About 5000 soldiers, with an adequate artillery and assisted by 320 war-vessels, guarded it against all intruders. But as ill-luck would have it, a pestilence had broken out in the ranks of the garrison there greatly reducing its number, before Mir Jumla came upon it, with the result that after a feeble resistance, the fort was surrendered, and the Assamese beat a hasty retreat to Srighat. The fort of Pancharatan also passed into the hands of the victor without any resistance. ‡

Leaving Ataullah as the commander of fort Jogighopa, Mir Jumla continued his victorious march. The Manas having been

* *Alamgirnamah*, p. 694.

† *Ibid*, p. 696.

‡ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 121: *Alamgirnamah*, pp. 696-97.

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crossed by a bridge of boats, the army was divided into two sections. Nasiru-d din Khan and other *amirs* with their men were ordered to proceed along the south bank of the Brahmaputra, while the general himself, with the main army, moved along the north bank of the river, keeping touch with the fleet. On the 4th February, 1662, the neighbourhood of Srighat was reached.

Further advance.

Meantime the news of the loss of Jogighopa had reached the Ahom king. He sent his leading officers, with a large reinforcement, to Srighat, and instructed them to make a bold attempt to check the further advance of the Mughals. The stronghold at Srighat was higher and bigger than that of Jogighopa, and was protected by a palisade of large logs of wood. But before the reinforcement arrived, Mir Jumla had attacked the fort, demolished the palisade and entered it in triumph. * Tho local garrison, panic-stricken, hastily fled across the Brahmaputra to fort Kajali, while the reinforcing army fell back on Samdhara.

The Assamese attempted to make a stand at fort Srighat but failed.

Master of Srighat, Mir Jumla moved a *kos* south and reoccupied Gauhati, the capital of Mughal Kamrup (which had already been vacated by the enemy), † and halted there for two days. The Imperial detachment which had been moving along the south bank of the Brahmaputra was equally lucky. It captured, without any opposition, fort Pandu, which lay opposite to Srighat, killing a large number of the retreating garrison. ‡ Beltala, which lay close to the east of Pandu, was now the object of a night-attack. § The Mughal contingent then advanced towards fort Kajali, which lay 7 *kos* east of Pandu, only

Capture of Gauhati and of forts Pandu and Kajali by the Mughals.

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 121.

† *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 69) : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

‡ *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 121 : *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 69).

§ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

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to find that the garrison had deserted it * and fled towards Kathalbari, † leaving behind some guns and munition, which were captured. Fort Kajali was occupied and entrusted to *Hasan Beg* as the *thanahdar*, and the detachment then joined the main army at Gauhati.

Whole of Kamrup recovered.

Thus, within a month of his starting from Koch Bihar, Mir Jumla succeeded in recovering the whole of Kamrup from the hands of the Assamese without any serious opposition. The authority of the Mughal Emperor was now restored, and his military prestige re-established.

Mir Jumla proceeded towards Assam.

Not satisfied with this achievement, Mir Jumla set himself to realise his gigantic ambition of conquering Assam, and, through it, to reach Burma and even distant China. Leaving Muhammad Beg as the *faujdar* of Gauhati, and receiving the submission of the Raja of Darrang, Mir Jumla set out for Assam proper, with Ghargaon, the capital, as his objective. Anxious to secure his line of communications, he decided to set up strong *thanahs* all along. Half-way to Samdhara, the whole army crossed the Brahmaputra and moved towards Simlagarh, on its south bank. The Raja of Dimarua, a powerful vassal of the Assam king, now propitiated the Mughal general by sending his nephew to attend on him. ‡

The Assam king concentrated his army at Samdhara.

Alarmed at the continued failure of his men to stem the tide of Mughal success and prevent the triumphant march of their commander into the heart of his realm, the Assam king gathered all his officers and men at Samdhara, which held the key to his dominion. § He then divided his army into two parts, one of which, under the command of the Barukia Bar Gohain, assisted by the Barpatra

* *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 70). † *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

‡ *Ibid*, pp. 70-71.

§ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*: *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 121 ; Dr. Wade's MS. History of Assam.

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Gohain, Tipam Raja, the Bar Phukan and others, was posted to guard the fort of Samdhara (near the confluence of the Bharali with the Brahmaputra), while the other part, under the Bhitarual Gohain, accompanied by the Burha Gohain, Sairam Raja and other chiefs, was stationed at the south bank of the river, * in charge of fort Simlagarh (which lay opposite to Samdhara).

The real object of the Mughal general (storming of Ghargaon) being now clear, the Assam king decided to make a firm stand at the stronghold of Simlagarh, which commanded the route to his capital. The fort was very strong and high, and occupied an almost impregnable position on the top of a hill, between the river Brahmaputra to the north and a hill extending for four *kos* to the south. It was surrounded by thick walls on the other two sides, with turrets mounted with cannon. A deep ditch encircled the walls, beyond which were pits, studded with pointed bamboo-pieces. † The fort was garrisoned by 20000 troops, supported by a fleet.

And made a bold stand at fort Simlagarh, opposite to it.

On the 20th February, 1662, Mir Jumla reached the vicinity of Simlagarh, and encamped on the bank of a *nalah* to the west of the fort. Finding it well-nigh impossible to take it by assault, he decided upon a siege. As was wont with the Mughals in case of a siege, a detachment of gallant warriors, under Dilir Khan and Mir Murtaza, attempted to advance towards the fort-wall, under the cover of artificial protective barriers, with elephants in front, amidst the thick of enemy fire. One night, a sally on the barriers was repulsed with great difficulty. After five days' strenuous exertions, the Imperialists succeeded in reaching the fort-wall. The final attack was delivered in the night of the 25th February. Dilir Khan, with 25 wounds on his elephant, dashed into the fort and put the Assamese

Fort of Simlagarh carried by storm.

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 121: *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

† *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, pp. 71–72).

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to flight, with the loss of a large quantity of war-materials. Their fleet also followed suit, alarmed at the expulsion of the local garrison. Next day, the Mughal general entered Simlagarh. *

The conquest of Simlagarh is an important episode in the campaign of Mir Jumla. For the first and also for the last time, the Assamese army offered a brilliant resistance to the Mughal invader and caused him many anxious moments. But the failure of the gallant defence and the capture of the strategic stronghold broke the spirit of Assamese opposition and sealed the fate of the land army, which never again ventured to face the Mughal host in the open.

Thoroughly unnerved at the news of this fresh misfortune, the Assamese garrison at Samdhara hastily fled, and the deserted fort was at once occupied by the victorious general. The conquest of the two important strongholds removed the obstacles in the path of Mughal advance to the Ahom capital, the fall of which was now imminent. The one ray of hope, however, lay in the Assamese fleet, which had retired no doubt, but was still undefeated.

Samdhara evacuated by by the Assamese.

Elated with his recent triumph, Mir Jumla moved onward, posting a suitable garrison at Samdhara, and came to Kaliabar (which lay a little to the south-east of Simlagarh) and encamped there. After three days' rest, he resumed his march, leaving Sayyid Nasiru-d din as the *faujdar* of Kaliabar.

On account of the hills skirting the river Brahmaputra at this point onward, the Mughal army had to move away from the bank, cut off from the fleet. † This temporary isolation of the army and the navy was the capital opportunity for the

* *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, pp. 71-72). Both the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 122, mention at this stage the fall of an Assamese fort in *Dakhinkol* (which is not however named), after a gallant defence of five to six days, followed by the retreat of the garrison and the fleet near by, thus corroborating obviously Shihabu-d-din's version of the conquest of Simlagarh fort.

† *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 72).

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Assamese to try the Parthian shot. The Mughal admiral, Ibn Husain, being temporarily away (with some of the ships of the line) from the main fleet, it was without his able guidance. In the night of the 3rd of March, 1662, when the fleet had just anchored, at the end of a day's journey, above Kaliabar, the Assamese navy 700/800 strong,* suddenly fell upon it. It appeared as if the Assamese navy would crush the Imperial fleet by its overwhelming numerical strength. The Mughal ships, with the river current against them, had a difficult time, yet they fought the enemy hard throughout the night; Munawwar Khan, grand-son of Isa Khan Afghan, did good service with 36 ships at his disposal, while the vessels manned by the Dutch and the Portuguese sailors also acquitted themselves creditably. At day-break, the admiral joined the fleet. This inspired confidence and strengthened the Mughal cause. For three hours more the struggle went on, but without any decisive result.

Decisive Mughal naval victory above Kaliabar.

Meantime a force, which had been despatched by Mir Jumla under Muhammad Mumin Beg to the assistance of the navy, suddenly arrived and blew the trumpets. This decided the fate of the engagement. A great confusion arose in the ranks of the enemy fleet, which took fright and hastily fled. † The Mughals gave a hot chase and succeeded in capturing over 300 ‡ enemy vessels (with a gun on each), while their crew, numbering at least 21000, was given no quarter, and perished miserably. To add to the misfortune, the Assamese ships that escaped, cast anchor at less than a mile's distance from the place where Mir Jumla was staying with his army. As soon as the retreating ships were visible, the general

* Glanius, p. 154, has six hundred ships.

† *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 73).

‡ The *Fathiyah* has 300/400 ships ; Glanius, p. 160 puts down 300 ships : the *Alamgirnamah* gives 400 war-vessels, with numerous guns, armaments and stores.

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ordered the artillery to open fire, and most of these were sunk.* Besides the ships and the guns, some big pieces of cannon and some munition also were secured as booty. Thus ended in dire disaster the last attempt of the Assam king to save his hearth and home from the clutches of the foreign invader. †

The naval battle off Kaliabar, "the crowning mercy" of Mir Jumla, was the most decisive event in the whole campaign. The Assamese navy was totally annihilated, and with it, the last gleam of hope vanished altogether. Like Hannibal (the great Carthagian) after the battle of Cannae, Mir Jumla could now easily have "dined" at the Ahom capital. "Glorious and triumphant, he believed that by this victory he already held the whole of Assam in his grasp," ‡ and that he was the most favoured child of Fortune.

Assamese fleet totally destroyed.

So great was the depression and despair which seized the Assamese that henceforward they gave up the idea of meeting the Mughals in open fight, and had recourse to surprises and night-attacks only. The fortress of Salagarh (built on a rock difficult of access on the Brahmaputra, a few miles above Kaliabar) was given up without resistance, and was occupied by Mir Jumla. § Here overtures for peace were received from the Ahom king, through some of his nobles, but these were rejected as a ruse for gaining time as well as for throwing him off his guard. ‖

Fort Salagarh evacuated.

On the 9th of March, 1662, Mir Jumla reached Lakhugarh, situated near what was then the confluence of the Dihing with

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* Glanius, pp. 160-61.

† The unnamed Dutch sailor who took part in the naval battle off Kaliabar gives a detailed account of it (*vide* Glanius, pp. 156-161), which is only briefly mentioned in the *Fathiyah* and the *Alamgirnamah* and does not at all find a place in the *Buranjis*.

‡ *Storia Do Mogor*, Vol. II. p. 99.

§ *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 122.

‖ *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 73).

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the Brahmaputra, about 40 miles above Kaliabar. Here an attempt of the Assam king to rally his dispirited forces for another encounter having proved futile,* peace negotiations were sought to be opened again. The Imperial general, however, had learnt by bitter experience not to believe in the sincerity of the Ahom king, and haughtily replied that he would deal with him only in his capital. †

And fort Lakhugarh surrendered to the Mughals.

The capture of Lakhugarh, followed by the stern rejection of the peace terms, led to the collapse of the Assam king. He thought further resistance futile, and anxious to save his own life, decided to fly away from the kingdom, leaving it at the mercy of the invader. The Burha Gohain, the Barpatra Gohain, the Bhitarual Gohain, a father-in-law of the king and a few others were ordered to stay at Ghargaon. The Bar Gohain, who had fled along the north bank of the Brahmaputra with his army, after the fall of Samdhara, and thereby had escaped open encounter with the Mughal commander as the latter had advanced along the south bank, now retreated to the Tiru hills. The king, accompanied by the Bar Barua and the Bar Phukan and others numbering about 5000 men, left Ghargaon for Charaideo with all his valuables, and thence moved to Raisat. Thinking it unsafe to stay there, he fled to Tipam, whence he came to Namrup, the eastern most part of his domain, amidst the pestilential airs of which, he thought himself to be immune from the attack of the Imperialists. ‡

Flight of the Assam king.

At Lakhugarh, Mir Jumla was compelled to leave his fleet (323 strong) behind, in charge of its commander, Ibn Husain. The Dikhu river on which Ghargaon stood and which then

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* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 123.

† *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 73).

‡ *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 123 : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

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joined the Dihing 8 *kos* to the north-west, was too shallow for the navy to pass along.* After a two days' halt at Lakhugarh, the Imperial commander, at the head of his land army, set out straight for the capital, along the high and wide *al* by which it could be approached. Debargaon was reached on the 13th March. Here the news of the flight of the Assam king to Namrup was received, and a final attempt at peace was made through five envoys sent by the Gohains from Ghargaon. One of them, however, deserted to the side of the Mughals, and advised them to reject the peace overtures, as they were now within easy reach of Ghargaon, where a rich booty awaited them. This was acted upon. †

Triumphant march of Mir Jumla through Debargaon, Gajpur and Trimohani to Ghargaon.

Leaving Ali Reza Beg as the *thanahdar* of Debargaon, Mir Jumla moved to Gajpur on the 15th March, 1662, whence an advance party was sent to Ghargaon to seize the elephants and other properties of the fugitive Assam king. Anwar Beg was posted as *thanahdar* of Gajpur. Next day, Trimohani (the confluence of the Dikhu and the Dihing) was reached. Nurulla was stationed as the officer in charge here. Ramdang (a place between Trimohani and Ghargaon) was then seized by Muhammad Muqim, and the day following (the 17th March, 1662), Mir Jumla entered Ghargaon in triumph, and quartered in the deserted palace of the Assam king. ‡

The long and weary march at last came to end, and Mir Jumla was really gratified at the apparent fulfilment of a task which had baffled previous generations. The spoils secured in course of the campaign and particularly at Ghargaon, the deserted capital, were enormous—82 elephants, about 3 *lakhs* of coins in gold and silver, 675 big guns, more than 9100 small guns including hand-grenades, about 4750 maunds

Rich spoils secured in course of the campaign, particularly at Ghargaon.

* *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 73).

† *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 123-24.

‡ *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 74).

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of powder in boxes or otherwise, 7828 shields, 1000 and odd ships, 173 store-houses for rice, each containing 10 to 1000 maunds of rice, besides a large quantity of raw materials—salt petre, iron, sulphur and lead. *

Master of the capital, Mir Jumla was not the man to sit idle and flatter himself with his achievement. The rainy season was fast approaching and he set himself to make adequate arrangements for keeping hold of the conquered realm and also for giving his veterans, worn-out and fatigued in course of the long march, a well-deserved rest. It was at first intended to spend the rainy season in camp at Lakhugarh. But a heavy down-pour for three continuous days indicated an early advent of the monsoon, and it was felt that there was no time to transport the immense booty with the help of the captured elephants that had yet to be broken in. Hence Mir Jumla resolved to encamp with his army at Mathurapur, a place on a high ground, about seven miles south-east of Ghargaon. The Ahom capital, rich with the spoils of war, was left in charge of a strong garrison under Mir Murtaza, with instructions to despatch the guns and other easily portable things to Jahangirnagar. Many outposts were set up in the region around Mathurapur—southwards at Deopani (between Ghargaon and Salpani) and at Salpani, at the foot of the Tiru Hills, and eastwards at Abhaypur (16 miles from Ghargaon in the direction of Namrup) and at Sinnatali to the north-east of Majuli island. The Dihing river, which held the key to co-operation with the fleet, was strongly guarded by a valiant band from Oudh under Jalal Khan. This completed the chain of fortified posts set up from Gauhati upwards, all along the bank of the Brahmaputra. †

Disposition of the Mughal forces on the eve of the rains (1662).

The occupation of Ghargaon and Mathurapur is the central event in the history of Mir Jumla's campaign. It marked the

* *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 75) : the *Alamgirnamah*, pp. 27-28 gives slightly different figures *e. g.*, 100 elephants, 208 battering guns *etc.*

† *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, pp. 85-86).

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climax of his military success, but it was at the same time destined to be the beginning of the end.

When the rains set in earlier than usual and with uncommon violence, the difficulties of the Mughal army began. The rivers overflowed their banks and laid the whole of the Assam valley under water : movement of the land army became impossible ; the outposts were isolated, provisions became scarce and forage for the animals was no where procurable. To add to these insurmountable difficulties presented by Nature, there were others, equally potent, offered by the inhabitants of the land. Thanks to the system of conscription, the Assam king was in no dearth of fighting men. Further, though his naval strength was greatly crippled owing to the disastrous defeat off Kaliabar, the land army had not yet suffered any great reverse and practically stood intact. In fact, the Assamese had only been scared away by the Mughals and were yet far from being crushed. With the advent of the rains, they soon resumed hostile operations with great zeal.

The rains found the Mughals in great difficulty which was augmented by the hostility of the Assamese.

The disposition of the Assamese army was as follows :—The Bar Gohain occupied the region of the Sessa river and Tiru Hills, south of Ghargaon, near the Mughal outpost of Salpani. The Burha Gohain was stationed with his men south of the Dilli river (which falls into the Dikhu four miles above Trimohani—its confluence with the Dihing), north of Ghargaon, while the father-in-law of the Assam king remained on the high ground of Kenduguri, on the bank of the Darika (which falls into the Dilli, about 10 miles above Trimohani), east of Ghargaon. Further to the north-east, at Solaguri, was posted a son of Tamuli Dalai, who himself was occupying fort Dimarua, north of Abhaypur. The great island of Majuli, (formed by the fork of the old beds of the two principal branches of the Brahmaputra—the Loohit and the Dihing) was occupied up to its western limits to the north of Debargaon

Disposition of the Assamese host.

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(opposite to Lakhugarh) by the Bhitarual Phukan, while the Baduli Phukan was stationed in the hills about 40 miles north-east of Ghargaon, near Boorhat (a Naga village on the Disang river just south of old Jaypur fort). *

The Assamese thus hemmed in the Mughal garrisons on all sides. Carefully avoiding an open engagement, they let slip no opportunity for cutting off communications and supplies, for seizing and killing all stragglers (men and animals) from the Mughal *thanahs*, and for harassing them by frequent night-attacks, in which they were adepts. "In fact during the whole rainy season from the beginning of May to near the end of October, 1662, the Mughal army in Assam lived in a state of siege".

Early in May, the Assamese made a night-attack upon the *thanah* of Debargaon. A timely arrival of reinforcements from the main army saved it, but only for a time. On the 10th May, the out-post at Gajpur was captured by the Ahoms, under the Bhitarual Phukan, † who killed the entire garrison including the *thanahdar*. They followed up their success by raising fortifications along the north bank of the Dihing as far west as Lakhugarh, with a view to stopping supplies from the fleet there to the army at Ghargaon. Mir Jumla speedily sent Sarandaz Khan with an adequate force to recover the place, but the latter could not move beyond *mauza* Teok ‡ (which lay between Trimohani and Gajpur), on account of the muds. Muhammad Murad also was sent with some ships, but a quarrel between the two ensued, and the latter alone pushed forward while the former lagged behind. A sudden night-attack on

The Assamese attacked Debargaon, captured Gajpur and totally destroyed a relieving contingent despatched thither.

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 125 : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

† *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 86).

‡ Teok in Gakirkhoa *mauza*, about 13 miles east of Jorhat (*vide* Sibsagar District Map).

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Muhammad Murad was made, and all his ships were captured and the sailors killed. *

Meantime, owing to the heavy rains of May, the Dihing river rose in flood, and caused great inconvenience to the men under Jalal Khan, who were posted to its south bank. To add to their troubles, they were pestered with repeated night-attacks by the Ahoms from the opposite bank. But the valiant *thanahdar* held his own against all adverse circumstances and repelled his foes. The outposts of Deopani † and Salpani were now the targets of attack. At Salpani, Miyanah Khan's vigilance baffled the efforts of the Bar Gohain to capture it, but a determined attack was soon made to seize the *thanah* of Deopani from the hands of Ghazi Khan and his feeble garrison. A nephew of the Bar Gohain with 10 to 12000 Assamese led the charge, but the fall of the commander, early in the fray, foiled the whole enterprise. Afterwards the Assamese placed it under a siege. The arrival of reinforcements from the main army under Abul Hasan infused courage into the drooping spirit of the Imperialists, and the enemy was speedily dispersed. ‡

Futile attack on the Mughal *thanahs* of Deopani and Salpani.

In spite of their reverses, the Assamese were soon bold enough to make attempts even upon Ghargaon, and only the sleepless vigilance of its commander, Mir Murtaza, prevented any disaster there. Encouraged by the daring activies of the Assamese soldiery, the inhabitants of Ghargaon, Mathurpur and Abhaypur, who had submitted on account of the humane and generous treatment of Mir Jumla and his forbiddance of plunder and rapine, now joined hands with them in night-attacks on the Imperial outposts. §

And on Ghargaon.

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* *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 86).

† Deopani lies due south of Sibsagar at the foot of a hill, and south-west of Ghargaon.

‡ *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 87).

§ *Ibid.*

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In the midst of this troublous situation, came the depressing news of the expulsion of the Mughal garrison from Koch Bihar and its recovery by king Pran Narayan.

The necessity for adopting strong deterrent measures against the civil population, as well as for reopening communication with the fleet at Lakhugarh by the recovery of Gajpur, was soon brought home to Mir Jumla. At the end of May, Farhad Khan was sent with Qurawal Khan and a strong detachment to recover Gajpur and to reinforce the *thanahs* of Ramdang and Trimohani and also to fetch supplies from Lakhugarh. But he lacked boats, the only means of transport during the rainy season, and waded through mud and *nalahs* to Teok, where his further advance was checked by the floods, which made the "fields look larger rivers than the Dihing itself." Farhad Khan in despair tried to return, but found his path blocked by the Assamese entrenchments. A strong fleet surrounded his forces, and for a week he was closely besieged. A relieving force under Muhammad Mumin Beg was held up on the way by a sudden flood. When all seemed hopeless, a daring *coup de main* by the resourceful Mughal officer saved the situation. One night, he seized some Assamese boats and with their help crossed a *nalah* in the early hours of the morning, and took the careless enemy encamped on its bank completely by surprise, and forced his way to Trimohani (*c.* 6th June, 1662). Thence he reached Ramdang, where Muhammad Mumin Beg joined him. * To strike terror into the heart of the inhabitants of Ramdang region (between Trimohani and Ghargaon) who had secretly rejoined the royalist ranks, a pillaging party was sent round by Farhad Khan, and the male population was killed and the women captured. On the 9th June, Farhad rejoined Mir Jumla at Mathurapur.

Mughal attempts to reopen communication with the fleet at Lakhugarh not successful.

The rainy season was now at its height, and the Mughal commander found it more and more difficult to maintain his *thanahs*. He therefore decided to evacuate them and

* *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, pp. 87-88).

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concentrate all his efforts on strengthening the defence of Ghargaon and Mathurapur only. The *thanahdar* of Abhaypur was ordered to join the headquarters (at Mathurapur), while the officers in charge of other outposts were asked to gather at Ghargaon. A strong garrison was posted at a strategic place south of Ghargaon (near the modern Nazira), surrounded on three sides by the Dikhu and on the fourth by a wall. *

Evacuation of Mughal outposts owing to heavy rains.

The Assamese were not slow to take advantage of the sad plight of the Mughals. Their king came out of his asylum in Namrup to Solaguri, only four days' march from Ghargaon and Mathurapur. He appointed the Baduli Phukan as the commander-in-chief and ordered him to expel the foreigners from his realm. The whole population flocked to his standard, and the entire tract east of Lakhugarh, excepting Ghargaon and Mathurapur, was soon recovered. Even these places were so closely invested that if a man dared to leave the camp he was certain to be shot. There was no chance for the arrival of provisions and forage from outside. The misery of the vast numbers of cavalry and infantry cooped up within such a narrow area can better be imagined than described. In the words of the Persian chronicler, "a similar case never happened before in the history of Delhi." †

Assamese venture upon Ghargaon and Mathurapur.

A bold effort was now made by the Baduli Phukan to take Mathurapur by storm. He occupied a strong position on the bank of the Dilli river east of Mathurapur, girt by a long wall connecting the hills to the south with the Dihing, and made several night-attacks upon Mathurapur, but thanks to the alertness and military skill of Dilir Khan, the right-hand man of Mir Jumla, these bore no fruit. ‡

Mathurapur closely invested but could not be captured.

* *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 88).

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid*, pp. 88-89.

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The Baduli Phukan and the Bar Gohain then made a combined assault on the outpost at Silghat (above Kaliabar, Dt. Nowgong) and captured it, compelling the garrison to retreat to Boorhat. The latter place was then attacked, but the Baduli Phukan was soon defeated and put to flight. Dilir Khan now led a vigorous charge against fort Dimarua under Tamuli Dalai and compelled him to surrender it. *

Initial success of a night-attack on the Mughal camp at Ghargaon and its ultimate failure.

Ghargaon bore the brunt of attack of the Assamese, as its recovery was their most cherished object. Though a previous attempt to capture it by the Saringh Raja was thwarted by Raja Sujan Singh, a most persistent endeavour was now made to take it by a night-assault. Several houses of the fugitive Assam Raja and his nobles outside the bamboo palisade of the city having been burnt down, the necessity for improving its fortifications arose. Farhad Khan was accordingly sent to the help of Mir Murtaza. A bamboo fort was made on the north-western part of the city stretching as far as the Dikhu river on one side and the northern corner of the palisade of the Raja's palace on the other. But these protective measures were of little avail, and a vigorous attack was made on the city in the night of the 8th of July. The Assamese stormed the bamboo fort and seized half of Ghargaon. It was only owing to the heroic efforts of Mir Murtaza and Farhad Khan that they were at last driven back, and the night of crisis passed away. †

A mud wall was then raised in place of the bamboo palisade, and the ground in front of it was cleared of all houses and trees. The night-attacks continued with unabated fury, especially on the north-eastern portion of the city across the Dilli and the Darika. On one occasion, the bridge over the latter connecting Ghargaon and Mathurapur was broken down, but it was immediately rebuilt and thenceforward guarded day and

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

† *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, pp. 88-89).

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night by the vigilant Mughals. In the night of the 12th July, a grand assault on Ghargaon was made by the Assamese in four divisions, but it was gallantly met by the defenders. Another attempt made three days later was equally futile. * The repeated failures cooled the ardour of the Ahoms. On the other hand, the Imperial garrison was now reinforced, and Rashid Khan relieved Farhad Khan in its command. He began to make vigorous reprisals against the enemy, and, on the 23rd July, captured its fortifications on the Kakujan *nalah* (flowing between Ghargaon and Mathurapur) and impaled 170 of his captives.

Attack on Ghargaon repeated but with no better success.

About this time negotiations for peace were made, but from what quarters it is not clear. † The terms of peace alleged to have been offered by the Mughal commander were obviously extravagant, the more so in view of the miserable condition of his army, which found it equally difficult to advance as to recede. According to the *Fathiyah*, the Assamese commander-in-chief at first agreed to the terms, subject to the approval of the king, but later on backed out on the withdrawal of the Mughal commander from Mathurapur owing to the outbreak of a violent epidemic, this having been interpreted as a sign of weakness.

Abortive peace attempts.

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* *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 89).

† The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* refers barely to an attempt of Mir Jumla to induce the Bharali Barua to come to terms, but the latter did not agree. The *Purani Asama Buranji* is entirely silent with regard to peace proposals at this stage. The *Fathiyah-i-Ibriyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 89) tells us that the Baduli Phukan started the negotiations, and Mir Jumla's terms were as follows :—

(a) The cession of all the country up to Ghargaon, the Assam king being allowed to retain Namrup and the whole of the hilly regions around.

(b) Payment of 30 *lakhs* of tolas of gold and silver as *peshkash* ;

(c) The immediate supply of 500 elephants that had still their first teeth and an annual tribute of 50 elephants.

(d) A daughter of the Assam king to be sent to the Imperial harem.

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Just at the moment when the tide of fortune appeared to turn in favour of the Mughals, a terrible epidemic of fever and dysentery broke out in their camp in Mathurapur (early in August, 1662), as the airs of the hilly tract around were extremely unhealthy. The daily death-roll was heavy, so much so that Dilir Khan's corps of 1500 horsemen was soon reduced to about a third of its strength. *

Outbreak of a serious epidemic in the Mughal camp at Mathurapur.

"It was altogether an extraordinary year," and, in addition to the virulent sickness, a severe famine soon broke out which augmented the miseries of the Mughal army and increased the death-roll. The only thing the army got in abundance was *shali* rice, and other necessaries of life were only to be had at fabulous prices—one *chillum* of tobacco was sold at Rs. 3, one *tolah* of opium at one gold *mohur* and one *seer* of salt at Rs. 30. † The sick had no suitable diet and perished miserably; many animals too died on account of dearth of forage. The dead could not be given proper burial and corpses were thrown into the neighbouring streams, which ultimately carried them down the Brahmaputra. ‡

Accompanied by a severe famine.

At last life at Mathurapur became intolerable, and, on the 18th of August, Mir Jumla went back to Ghargaon with all his men in the midst of a heavy down-pour. § One quarter of the stored rice, some guns and many wounded and sick people were left to their fate for want of conveyance.

Compelled Mir Jumla to leave it for Ghargaon.

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* *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 91).

† *Ibid.*

‡ The Dutch sailor who was with the Mughal fleet at Lakhugarh tells us (Glanius, p. 171), "We could not have believed there died so many thousands of men, had not the river brought them to us. The water became so infected by the prodigious quantities of dead bodies thrown therein, that several persons perished by that means; wherefore at length we boiled the water before we used it."

§ *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 89).

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The discomfiture of the Mughals whetted the zeal of the Assamese, and immediate attacks upon Ghargaon followed. *

Renewed night-attacks on Ghargaon.

A well-concerted assault on the 15th of September was repulsed and the enemy chased back for many miles with great slaughter. Thereafter the Assamese desisted from further mischief.

But as ill-luck would have it, the refugees from Mathurapur soon infected the garrison at Ghargaon and there was a recrudescence of the epidemic which, combined with the scarcity of proper nourishment for the sick and general dearth of provisions, wrought a great havoc on the Mughal camp.

Appearance of epidemic there.

By the end of September, 1662, the worst was over. The rains began to decrease, the flood subsided, the roads emerged out of water and communications became easier. The first welcome news which had reached Mir Jumla a fortnight earlier, was the re-occupation of Debargaon by Yadgar Khan, under instructions from Ibn Husain, the admiral of the fleet at Lakhugarh. Unaided by the land army confined far away at Ghargaon and Mathurapur, the able admiral, by his admirable prudence and tact, had maintained the fleet intact, and, with its help, protected the outposts at Kaliabar and other places westward along the Brahmaputra, thus keeping open the line of communication with Gauhati. At the news of the fall of Gajpur (early in May, 1662), he had despatched a flotilla, under one of his officers named Ali Beg, to recapture the place. The latter could not achieve much success; he halted with his ships at Bansbari, which lay between Debargaon and Gajpur, and satisfied himself with seizing only a few of the Assamese war-boats from Tamuli Dalai who had encamped there.

Admirable work of the Mughal fleet at Lakhugarh during the rains.

The news of the failure of Ali Beg's efforts to retake Gajpur and of the isolation of the Mughal army at Ghargaon, combined

* *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 89).

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with the increasing pressure of the Ahoms, induced the admiral to recall Ali Beg and the garrison under Yadgar Khan at Debargaon to Lakhugarh, and fortify his camp there. The Bhitarual Phukan from his stronghold in the Majuli island now occupied Debargaon, and led a series of night-attacks upon the fleet at Lakhugarh, but was repulsed each time. * To prevent a recurrence of these hostilities, Ibn Husain boldly took the offensive, and sent pillaging parties to harass the Assamese camp in the Majuli island.

Debargaon recaptured by the Mughals (September, 1662).

At the advent of better times, Yadgar Khan attacked the Assamese garrison at Debargaon under the Bhitarual Phukan, and compelled him to vacate it and take shelter in Rangali *chapari* (in the Majuli). Debargaon was at once reoccupied, and Ibn Husain reported the good news to the Mughal general at Ghargaon. †

Communication between the army at Ghargaon and the fleet at Lakhugarh restored.

The capture of Debargaon was followed by the defeat of Tamuli Dalai at Bansbari and his flight therefrom, ‡ leaving the way to Gajpur quite clear. It now devolved on Mir Jumla to open the way from his side, thereby restoring communication with the fleet at Lakhugarh. For this purpose, the Dikhu was bridged near Ghargaon after three unsuccessful attempts, and a detachment was sent under Abul Hasan to reach Lakhugarh *via* Gajpur and Debargaon, along a circuitous high road running by way of Saringh and the hills south of Ghargaon. Complete success attended Abul Hasan's enterprise. The long-lost connection with the fleet was revived, and large quantities of provisions reached Ghargaon both by land and water in the last week of October, 1662. §

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* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*; *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 90).

† *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, pp. 90-91): *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

‡ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

§ *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 92).

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Though disease and famine had greatly thinned their ranks, the Mughals quickly recovered their morale with the turn of the tide in their favour. The land having dried up, the irresistable cavalry—the nightmare of the Assamese, was once more able to take the field. The Assam king took the earliest opportunity to withdraw again to his mountain asylum in Namrup with his leading nobles. The indefatigable Mughal general now resumed the offensive and began to retaliate on his enemy. He sent out detachments to scour the country, and wherever an opportunity occurred for the horsemen to act, they drove the Assamese before them, "like sheep before the wolf".

Mir Jumla now resumed the offensive.

On the 10th of November, a flotilla under Abul Hasan went down the Dilli river to Trimohani and took the Baduli Phukan by the rear, totally defeating him after a hard fight and destroying his trenches. Five days after, the Mughal general himself left Ghargaon to co-operate with Abul Hasan. Mir Jumla succeeded in capturing the remaining portion of the Assamese fortifications north-east of Ghargaon, and reached the Dihing river on the 20th November, on the other bank of which the Burha Gohain was stationed with his men. A sharp engagement by land and water followed, lasting for the whole day. In the evening, the Burha Gohain's munition having been exhausted, he was compelled to fly away leaving his post in the hands of the Mughals. *

And defeated the Baduli Phukhan and the Burha Gohain.

The defeat of the Burha Gohain was followed by the submission of the Baduli Phukan (the commander-in-chief) with his three brothers (30th November, 1662). He had been suspected of treason, and went over to the Mughals to escape from the punishment of his sovereign. † His example was followed by many others, and very soon about half

The Baduli Phukan and many others deserted to the Mughals.

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 125 : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

† *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, p. 92) : *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 125 : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

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of the king's followers deserted him. The Baduli Phukan exhorted Mir Jumla to hunt down the Assam king with his chief officers, and himself gathered 3/4000 men for the purpose. He was appointed *subahdar* of the region between Ghargaon and Kamrup. At his own suggestion, he was next sent with a detachment of Mughal troops to attack the Assamese chiefs posted at Solaguri (6th December, 1662). * Numerous solicitations for peace began to flow in, but Mir Jumla summarily rejected them all. †

On the 7th December, Mir Jumla crossed the Dihing at Solaguri, and marched towards Tipam *en route* to Namrup, to expel the Assam king therefrom. But he was not destined to realise his aim. The stress and strain of the campaign, the hardships and privations he had shared with the ordinary soldiers, the pestilential airs of Upper Assam during the rains, all told upon his robust yet old frame and shattered it altogether. The day he reached the bank of the Dihing (20th November, 1662) he had a fainting fit. Twenty days after, while he was on his way to Tipam, he was seized with a burning fever and severe chest complaints. Still the veteran general persisted in his advance and reached Tipam a week after. ‡

Mir Jumla's attempt to capture the Assam king frustrated by illness.

But this was the furthest point in his advance. His officers and men, sick of the guerilla warfare, disease, famine and the unhealthy air of Assam, and also greatly reduced in number, § cast longing looks behind and would not advance further. They threatened desertion rather than spending another rainy season in Assam, much less in Namrup, "a part of hell, whose climate was worse than that of the well

Great weariness and discontent of the Mughal army.

* *Fathiyah* (JASB, 1872, pp. 92-93) : *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 125-26.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid*, p. 93 : *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 126.

§ On December 10, the Dutch Surgeon, Gelmer Vorburg, who accompanied Mir Jumla in Assam writes (*Storia Do Mogor*, Vol. IV. p. 430), "The general

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of Babel." The news of a famine in Bengal and the consequent reduced rations ordered for the sailors at Lakhugarh, added fuels to the fire of popular discontent. The tact and persuasive eloquence of Dilir Khan quieted the soldiery and at the same time induced the general to give up his project. *

Taking advantage of the internal dissensions in the Mughal camp and the consequent disorder in their ranks, the Burha Gohain now made a last attempt to repulse the Mughals but with no better success than before. †

Conclusion of peace—its terms.

Meantime the Assam king had renewed the peace overtures and requested Dilir Khan to intercede with the Mughal general on his behalf. The extreme unwillingness of his officers and men to move further, his own persistent illness and the prospect of concluding a peace on favourable terms owing to the importunities of the Assam king, now weighed with Mir Jumla in agreeing to a treaty of peace, which was concluded on the following terms :—

(a) The Assam king and the Tipam Raja ‡ would each send a daughter to the Imperial harem.

(b) The Assam king would deliver immediately a war-indemnity of 20000 *tolas* of gold, 120000 *tolas* of silver and 20 elephants to the Emperor (besides 15 elephants for Mir Jumla and 5 for his chief lieutenant, Dilir Khan).

(c) He would send 300000 *tolas* of silver and 90 elephants to the Mughal Emperor within the next 12 months, in three equal instalments, as the balance of the indemnity.

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had already lost two thirds of his men and horses by disease, and had only 4000 horsemen left...everybody was ill and suffering from swellings...."

* The unnamed Dutch sailor (Glanius, pp. 173-74) tells us that one of his chief officers, obviously Dilir Khan, addressed the general as follows :—"When we came to these parts first, we had four armies, all in good order and disposition, whereas now we have not one that deserves the name, the greatest of the soldiers being either dead or in a sick and languishing condition."

† *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 126.

‡ The daughter of the Tipam Raja seems not to have been sent as stipulated,

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(d) He would hand over the sons of the Burha Gohain, the Barpatra Gohain and the Ghargaonia Phukan as hostages to Mir Jumla, pending the full payment of the money.

(e) *Sarkar* Darrang (bounded by Gauhati on the west and the Bharali river on the east) in *Uttarkol*, and Desh Rani, Beltala, the Naga Hills and Desh Dimarua extending as far as the Kalang river in *Dakhinkol*, were to be ceded to the Mughals.

(f) An annual tribute of 20 elephants was to be given.

(g) The Assam king agreed to release the war-prisoners and also the family of the Baduli Phukan, who had gone over to the side of the Mughals.

The Mughal general sealed the treaty of peace by sending gold-embroidered weapons and presents, worth 15000 rupees, to the Assam king. *

After some delay caused by an attempt to avoid the stipulation regarding hostages, the Assam king sent, on the 5th of January, 1663, his daughter together with the first instalment of gold and silver, the hostages and 10 elephants to the Mughal camp, and promised to deliver 30 elephants more by the time the Mughal general would reach Lakhugarh on his way back. Four days later, 11 more elephants were sent in.

Soon after the conclusion of peace (on the 10th January, 1663) Mir Jumla gave orders for a return march, to the intense

* A great deal of confusion exists with regard to the exact terms of the treaty of 1663. The *Fathiyah* and the *Alamgirnamah* only give us details of the peace terms. The account of the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* is vague, while the *Purani Asama Buranji* agrees in general with the Persian works. An Assamese *Puthi* containing an account of the treaty of 1663 and its sequel, gives figures which are inconsistent with one another and are also incompatible with the Mughal version (see Gait's "Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, pp. 17-18). The unnamed Dutch sailor (Glanius, pp. 174-75) gives a greatly exaggerated account of the peace terms—the Assam king was to give "half of his kingdom and the youngest of his daughters...two thousand elephants, some millions of ready money and his richest vessels full of excellent roots (probably lignum-aloes) with which the country abounded, and which are of inestimable value." Bernier and Manucci are, however, totally silent on the point.

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joy of all. He was still sick (and had to move in a *palki*) and did not go to Ghargaon, but moved straight (from Tipam) to Trimohani, where the war-prisoners and the Baduli Phukan's family arrived. Thence he moved to Debargaon, and, on the 25th of January, started for Lakhugarh. There he was joined by Mir Murtaza, with all the spoils captured at Ghargaon and 25 elephants as part of tribute. Desirous of halting at Gauhati to arrange for the administration of Mughal Kamrup and then to march against Koch Bihar, Mir Jumla now sent his main army along *Dakhinkol* to Baritalah (the Imperial frontier post in the south-west), where it was to cross the Brahmaputra and co-operate in the recovery of the Koch realm. He, with the hostages, moved from Lakhugarh by boat and reached the vicinity of Kaliabar, whence he travelled by road along the plain to the north of the Kalang river up to Kajali (a distance of about 42 *kos* traversed in 4 days). Amidst the dense growth of reeds and grass that covered the entire path along the Kajali plain, the men and animals were reduced to great straits for want of provisions and forage and possibly owing to the hostility of the Assamese as well, * so much so that for "four days the men lived on water and the animals on grass."

Mir Jumla retired from Assam (Jan. 1663).

Mir Jumla rested for a few days at Kajali, where he received the submission of the mother and the son of the Raja of Darrang and the mother and the nephew of the Raja of Dimarua,

* The *Fathiyah* and the *Alamgirnamah* make no mention of the hostile activities of the Assamese during the retreat of the Mughals, probably for the simple reason that it would have amounted to a confession of failure of the whole enterprise, a truth unpalatable alike to the authors and their patrons. It is difficult to disbelieve the unanimous testimony of the foreigners (*Storia Do Mogor*, Vol. II. p. 101, Bernier's Travels, p. 173) and particulary that of the unnamed Dutch sailor—Glanius's Translation, p. 182, regarding the discomfiture of the army on its return journey :—"In his retreat, he (Mir Jumla) was ever and anon set upon by his enemies, who taking their advantage, enclosed whole troops, in plains full of mire, and slew them." The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Purani Asama Buranji*, however, are entirely silent here.

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whose territories had been formally incorporated with the Mughal empire. Here he had a relapse of his illness, which developed into asthma. On the 9th of February, he left Kajali and reached Pandu on the day following, where he was joined by Dilir Khan from Lakhugarh (with eight elephants), and thence crossed the Brahmaputra to Gauhati. Rashid Khan was appointed *faujdar* at Gauhati, and Muhammad Beg as the *thanahdar* of Kajali under him. From Gauhati Mir Jumla moved to Baritalah, where the Koch Bihar detachment joined him. The alarming increase of his illness here, compelled Mir Jumla to give up his project of invading Koch Bihar in person, and he proceeded direct to Dacca. But before he could reach there, he died on board his barge, on the 30th March, 1663.

Mir Jumla's death : its significance.

The death of Mir Jumla closes perhaps the most important and eventful chapter in the history of Ahom-Mughal politics as well as in that of Mughal foreign policy. The grandest and the most ambitious attempt of Mughal India to attain to its natural frontiers in the north-east now ended. The magnitude of the task, its initial success and its ultimate stupendous failure and its consequences, all invite food for serious reflection.

The Assam campaign a great military exploit no doubt.

Judged as a military exploit, the Assam conquest of Mir Jumla is undoubtedly a great tribute to his prudent and resourceful generalship and his skilful military strategy. In less than six weeks' time (since his starting from Gauhati, the headquarters of Kamrup government) Mir Jumla rode roughshod over the whole length of Assam up to its capital—Ghargaon, thus traversing a distance of about 200 miles, with very little loss to his army and fleet, in the face of almost unsurmountable difficulties presented by Nature as well as by the Parthian tactics of the enemy. This was indeed a great feat of arms, unprecedented in the annals of Mughal India, not unworthy to find a place by the side of Hannibal's passage across the Pyrenees and the Alps to Italy. Well might the

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triumphant Mughal commander exclaim, "*veni, vidi, vici*," after his capture of the Ahom capital.

But the bright picture soon fades away, so that the history of the rest of Mir Jumla's campaign is "not unlike that of Napoleon's ill-fated irruption into the territories of the Czar," and rain, pestilence and famine did as much injury to the Mughal general as snow and frost did to the French monarch. The year 1662 which saw the expedition was after all an extraordinary one. The rains began earlier than usual with uncommon violence and converted the whole realm of Assam into one huge swamp. For about six months (May-October, 1662) military operations were rendered impossible, and the Mughal detachments were compelled to lie "cabined, cribbed and confined," in their water-logged camps, isolated from one another, cut off from the fleet and constantly pestered by the night-attacks of the Ahoms. To add to the misery of the beleaguered army, pestilence and famine soon broke out with tremendous fury working a great havoc on it.

Undaunted by the freaks of Nature and of Fortune which Mir Jumla could neither have foreseen nor averted, he prepared manfully to face them as best as he could, and, as soon as the rains and diseases had subsided, he boldly resumed the offensive. Once more he carried all before him, and just at the moment when the fugitive Assam king was about to fall into his grip, the extreme unwillingness of his discontented and distressed soldiery to continue further warfare together with his own fatal illness, compelled him to draw back leaving his task unfinished. The brilliant manner in which he completed the return journey through the inhospitable country amidst the active opposition of the people, extorted the admiration even of his contemporaries. * There was certainly a great loss of men and materials, but it was unavoidable in the circumstances, and, under a less able commander, it would have been completely ruinous.

* The unnamed Dutch sailor (Glanius, pp. 82–83), Bernier (p. 172) and Manucci (Vol. II. p. 107) all bestow high praises on Mir Jumla for the great skill and ability with which he conducted the return journey.

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True it is that no signal military triumph adorns the pages of the history of Mir Jumla's Assam campaign and that his martial qualities were not even once put to severe test, in spite of the great resources in men and materials commanded by his royal opponent. But the engagements which he fought make it abundantly clear that he stood head and shoulders above the Assamese generals in military craft and strategy. The unnamed Dutch sailor who saw through the end of the expedition, sharing the great hardships and privations it involved, has nothing but praise for the boldness of design, prompt action and able and tactful leadership of his "general", whom he dubs as "a wise and valiant captain, the soldiers' darling and the peoples' favourite." *

Although a military feat redounding greatly to the credit of Mir Jumla, the Assam campaign will ever stand as a monument of his great political folly and lamentable misjudgment. It was certainly a rash and wild venture, extremely unwise and totally inexpedient. And failure was, indeed, writ large upon it. † Deaf to the voice of experience, reason and prudence, Mir Jumla was carried away by his soaring ambition, wreckless spirit of adventure and inordinate thirst for military glory to attempt a daring raid into a foreign land of peculiar physical geography—interspersed with a good many hills, rivers, *nalahs*, bogs and morasses, and marked by a violent rainy season (of about 8 months in a year), unwholesome climate and putrid water, "separated from the world like the letter *aliph*," and strewn with the grave of many a past adventurer.

But extremely unwise and inexpedient.

* Glanius, p. 77. Bernier and Manucci also testify to the military genius and resourceful command of the Mughal general.

† I may refer in this connection to the suggestive title, "*Fathiyah-i-Ibriya*," —*Victories that give warning*, given to the history of the Assam campaign by Shihabu-d din, the *waqia-navis* of Mir Jumla. The illusive nature of the triumph, or, in plain words, its real failure, has been to my mind quite ingeniously hinted at in the title-page.

That Mir Jumla's expedition was regarded as a rash and an imprudent venture even by his contemporaries, is quite clear from the following remarks of the

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It was, of course, the obvious duty of the Bengal *subahdar* to recover the lost territories in Kamrup from the Ahom usurper and re-establish Imperial authority there. This was easily accomplished within a month of his departure from Koch Bihar (early in February, 1662). Had he stopped there and refrained from pursuing his chimerical scheme of wiping out the Assam kingdom altogether, he would possibly have retained his conquests in Koch Bihar and kept his hold firm on Kamrup, and would have gone down to posterity as an invincible warrior who had never known defeat. But Fate ordained otherwise, and Assam proved to be the grave of Mir Jumla's reputation.

Even if he had succeeded in capturing the Assam king and annexing his domain to the Mughal empire, he could not have retained his prize on a permanent basis. The physical features of the land, the sturdy vigour and love of independence of the people and the abundant military resources of its king on the one hand, and the noted weakness of the Mughal navy, the great distance of Assam from the seat of Imperial authority, and, above all, the strong aversion of the Mughals for this land of flood, earthquake and pestilence and of magic and witchcraft on the other, militate against the possibility of a permanent occupation of the country.

It is no wonder that the triumph of Mir Jumla was extremely illusory, and its political effect quite short-lived. The Assam conquest proved in the end to be nothing more than a plundering raid, not unlike Alexander the Great's Indian campaign. In fact, if the success of an undertaking is to be judged by its ultimate results, Mir Jumla's heroic enterprise must be regarded as a stupendous failure, which had far-reaching adverse political consequences. True it is that

Results of the Assam campaign apparently substantial but really transitory.

unnamed Dutch sailor who took part in it—"In effect it seemed to be a rash enterprise, and that the example of so prodigious an army, which lately perished in the same parts (the disastrous aggressive venture of Islam Khan in the autumn of 1638 is obviously referred to), where we went, should have deterred our general" (*vide* Glanius's Translation, p. 151).

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he harried the Ahom realm almost to its farthest extremity and compelled the helpless king to sign an ignominious treaty ceding the whole of *sarkar* Darrang—the home of wild elephants, as well as the strategic territories of the frontier vassal hill-chieftains in *Dakhinkol.* Immediate payment of a large war-indemnity, hostages for the due submission of the balance and a princess for the Royal harem were the other important stipulations the Ahom ruler was forced to agree to. The complete fulfilment of the terms of the treaty would have enabled Mir Jumla to claim "peace with honour", and thereby finish his enterprise with success. But this was never achieved. The awe-inspiring presence of the renowned general with his tried soldiery and his grim resolve to pursue the warfare to the end, in face of all odds, suggested to the Assam king the necessity for complying with the preliminary stipulations quite promptly and satisfactorily, so as to induce Mir Jumla to leave his domain in no time. He sent his daughter with an adequate dowry, paid the first instalment of indemnity, gave hostages for the discharge of the balance and released the Mughal subjects and partisans captured in war.

But the most important stipulations, *i. e.*, the territorial cessions and the payment of further instalments seem never to have been carried out, and remained practically a dead letter.* To all intents and purposes, the treaty of peace of 1663 was treated no better than a scrap of paper by the Assamese, and the Mughals

* From the *Alamgirnamah* (p. 1068) it is easy to gather that Darrang was never actually occupied by the Mughals. For, its author makes it clear that Gauhati continued to be the frontier of the Bengal *subah* (in which Kamrup was included) even after Mir Jumla's Assam conquest. That the cession of Darrang was only nominal is deducible also from the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Purani Asama Buranji* (p. 128). In their account of the warfare waged during the reign of king Chakradhvaj Singh, the successor of Jayadhvaj Singh, the only Mughal *thanah* mentioned as having been attacked by the Assamese, east of the river Bar Nadi is that of Bansbari (a *mauza* in the extreme south-west corner of Darrang District, near the mouth the Bar Nadi) on its left bank, a little to the east of Gauhati. No other fortified post was apparently set up by the Mughals for keeping hold of the important

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appear to have acquiesced in it. Mir Jumla himself probably realised the futility of these paper-concessions and did not take them seriously. For, he did not make any attempt to hold the ceded territories by planting military garrisons in them, nor did he take the hostages—the only guarantee for the redemption of

territory of Darrang stretching up to the Bharali river in the east. The truth of this suggestion is confirmed by the author of the *Fathiyah-i-Ibriyah*, who refers to the garrisoning of Gauhati and Kajali only by Mir Jumla on his return march, by way of securing his conquest in Assam.

Then as regards the cession of the territories of the border hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol e. g.*, Rani, Beltala and Dimarua Rajas, it might be pointed out that it was also equally ineffective. True, the border chieftains made a show of submission to Mir Jumla. But they were too proud of their independence and too secure in their inaccessible habitations to allow their domains to form a part and parcel of even the kingdom of the Assam king (who had to be satisfied with their vassalage only), and so would hardly agree to their incorporation within the Mughal empire. As soon as the Mughal commander turned his back, they re-transferred their allegiance to the Assam king, on whose side we find at least some of them fighting in subsequent warfare. The *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 128, makes a significant statement that the refusal of the frontier chiefs to submit to the Mughals and their persistent loyalty to the Assam king were put forward as grounds of complaint by the Bengal *subahdar* who succeeded Mir Jumla. The implication underlying the accusation is quite clear. Perhaps the most glaring acknowledgment of the hollowness of the territorial concessions is furnished by the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Purani Asama Buranji* (p. 131) when they inform us that a conciliatory letter was addressed by the Mughal Emperor (Aurangzib) to king Chakradhvaj Singh (about the year 1665), expressing his readiness to maintain the frontier set up at the time of the conquest of Kamrup—the Bar Nadi river.

As for the payment of the balance of the war-indemnity, the account of the *Buranjis* is extremely meagre and obscure. In only one work is the topic dealt with fully, and there too in a self-contradictory and confusing way. It appears, Prof. Sarkar has laid undue stress on that *Buranji* in concluding that "the promised war-indemnity was paid in full in three years' time, the last instalment being paid as late as May, 1667." The payments of the money are certainly nowhere recorded by the Muhammadan historians, and the repeated demands for the submission of the arrears alleged (by the *Buranjists*) to have been made by successive Mughal *faujdars* upon the Assam king seem, apart from any other consideration, to render Mr. Sarkar's contention untenable.

It might be added that the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Purani Asama Buranji* agree that the successor of king Jayadhvaj Singh

the war-indemnity, along with him but left them behind at Gauhati, whence they were soon released.* He thus voluntarily threw away the trump card in his hands.

The Assam campaign was in its essence a barren enterprise, and Mir Jumla returned from it laden only with riches (gathered by the cruel method of exhumation of the Ahom tombs) and vast spoils of war, gained at the cost of an enormous loss of men (about 20000 infantry and 8000 cavalry) and materials, and honour and prestige to boot. Kamrup was no doubt recovered, but Koch Bihar slipped away, and not an inch of territory was really added to the Mughal empire. What was worse still is the fact that the security of the existing domain was greatly jeopardised. The audacious attempt of Mir Jumla to subjugate the proud, independent and powerful kingdom of Assam still in the hey-day of its prosperity, involving untold miseries to its king and the people, led to an inevitable national reaction which affected the future of Mughal Kamrup. Ahom national consciousness and patriotic feeling were roused to a high pitch producing a strength of purpose and unity of action unparalleled in their history, the first fruits of which were reaped during the regime of Chakradhvaj Singh, the energetic and capable cousin of Jayadhvaj Singh, with the ultimate result that within two decades of the Assam campaign, Kamrup was lost for good. †

And its ultimate effect disastrous.

was on the war-path ever since his accession to the throne, and vigorously trod along it to victory. The terms of the peace of 1663 were too humiliating to be complied with, and he was anxious to wipe off the stain of the last discomfiture as early as he could. He was thus in no mood to pay off the rest of the indemnity, though in order to gain time to recoup his strength, he dallied with the Mughal envoys on that item.

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 129.

† The necessity for merging the diversity of ideas and actions in one united and earnest endeavour against the national enemy and also for adequate preparations towards its realisation, is beautifully brought out in a series of metaphors, indulged in by an Ahom officer, at the council of war convoked by king Chakradhvaj Singh on the eve of his struggle against the Mughals (*vide Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 133-34).

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The ignominious part played by the Assamese in the most critical juncture of their national history evokes a great deal of surprise and invites explanation. The personal bravery, military skill and tenacity of purpose of the Assamese soldiery has been extolled even by the contemporary Persian chroniclers in unmistakable terms. The Assam king was not at all lacking in men, money or war-materials. The strength of his fortifications, the excellence of his artillery and gun-powder caused surprise even to the Mughals. Why is it that with all the requisite materials for victory, the Assamese failed miserably to stem the tide of Mughal success?

Causes of the failure of the Assamese analysed.

The reason is not far to seek. There was no capable helmsman to steer the ship of state through the stormy waters of foreign invasion. The Assamese were at that time a body without a head. The priest-ridden, hen-pecked, feeble-hearted, stiff-necked, indolent and tactless king—Jayadhvaj Singh, with his spasmodic outbursts of energy was totally unfit to cope with the perilous political situation, which demanded the ability, sustained energy, cool determination and sound judgment of a monarch like Pratap Singh. His character is a curious study. Like Humayun, he would do things by fits and starts: like him, indecision and fickleness seem to have been ingrained in his nature. He showed great vigour in conquering Mughal Kamrup during the political turmoil engendered by the War of Succession; but when the time for retribution arrived, he failed to face the situation manfully, and left everything in the hands of the selfish and disunited band of his officers. The height of his folly was the cowardly flight from the capital, leaving the country to its fate, long before Mir Jumla had actually come upon him.*

The incompetence, habitual indolence and indecision of king Jayadhvaj Singh.

* The *Asam Buranji from the Dihingia Raja to Pramatha Singh* (Journal of Indian History, December, 1926, p. 372) records an amusing story which brings out the indolence and inefficiency of king Jayadhvaj Singh. The *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 123, mentions an anecdote in which the king stands self-condemned

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The absence of a strong central authority which could marshal and co-ordinate all the sinews of war, inspire and bring out the innate bravery of the people, putting down all divisions and dissensions and also enforce strict discipline in the army, necessarily gave rise to mutual rivalry, jealousy and quarrels amongst the Assamese generals, making unity of action impossible. *

Engendered rivalry and jealousy amongst his officers rendering unity action impossible.

The defects of Ahom military organisation as against the Mughals were clearly revealed in course of the struggle. As has already been noted, the Assamese had such a great horror for horsemen that a single trooper could put to flight 100 well-armed *paiks*, so that the Mughal cavalry carried all before it whenever it appeared in action. As regards the navy, the heavily-built Assamese *bacharis*, manned by 60/70 oarsmen, lacked the mobility and rapidity of manœuvre possessed by the light-bodied Mughal *kosahs*, manned by a few expert sailors. † The superior nautical skill and swift movement of the *kosahs*—the mainstay of the *nawwara*, won for the Imperialists the decisive victory off Kaliabar, in spite of the overwhelming numerical strength of the Assamese fleet.

Innate defects of Ahom military organisation.

for his own sloth and inaction. The unenviable epithet, "Bhagania Raja" (the fugitive king), by which Jayadhvaj Singh is commonly known clearly expresses the contempt and derision aroused by his faint-heartedness and incapacity in popular mind.

* The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Purani Asama Buranji* are replete with illustrations on this point. The Bar Gohain (one of the chief officers of the Assam king) practically kept himself aloof from the struggle : the Bhitarual Phukan and Tamuli Dalai would not co-operate even after they had been singly defeated—the former at Debargaon and the latter at Bansbari, in the winter of 1662. The most glaring instance of indiscipline and isolated action was the desertion of the Baduli Phukan, the Assamese commander-in-chief, to the enemy camp, at the most critical moment of the history of the nation. The *Assam Buranji from the Dihingia Raja to Pramatha Singh* also (Journal of Indian History, December, 1926, pp. 372-73) refers to the absence of able generalship at the time of Jayadhvaj Singh.

† *Fathiyah* (JBORS, Vol. I. pp. 80-81 and JASB, 1872, pp. 80-81).

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By far the greatest factor which weighted the scale in favour of the Mughals was, however, the transcendent military genius of Mir Jumla—the greatest general the age produced. He was as much superior to his adversaries as Hannibal was to the Italian captains of war. In the dark background of the dismal enterprise, his sterling character shines with undimmed brilliance. His humanity, sense of justice, tact, moderation and humility won for him the confidence of friends and foes alike. The cool determination, untiring patience and the undaunted vigour with which he pursued his visionary ideal in the face of tremendous odds, has invested his innate aggressive adventure with a halo of martyrdom and glory. Though he failed in his mission, he failed grandly, leaving with the Ahoms a remembrance of his great name.

Transcendent military genius of Mir Jumla.

Section II. (B) Ahom-Mughal history after Mir Jumla's invasion.

The two decades that elapsed after Mir Jumla's Assam campaign marked the last phase of Mughal policy in the north-east frontier. The most daring attempt at the attainment of natural boundaries in that direction had failed miserably, and a reaction soon set in. The Mughals fight strictly on the defensive, and, for the next twenty years, make a most persistent effort to retain their hold on Kamrup against an equally determined policy of the Assamese to oust them therefrom. Gauhati, the unfortunate capital, now becomes the sport of the contending powers. At last Nemesis overtakes the Mughals, who expiate for their ill-conceived territorial greed with the loss of the last vestige of their authority in Kamrup. The north-east frontier soon shrinks back finally to the region of the Sankosh river from the Bar Nadi—the acknowledged boundary between the Mughal and the Ahom domains during the last seventy years.

Key-note of the post-Mir Jumla period of Ahom-Mughal history—a reaction against Mughal aggressive policy.

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The history of this period is full of striking incidents which crowd upon one another with dramatic suddenness. In Bengal, Mir Jumla's successor Shaista Khan's long regime being mainly occupied with the task of much-needed internal reform as well as of withstanding enemies nearer home, Emperor Aurangzib, who long outlived this last act in the tragic historic drama, pulled the leading strings from Delhi. For the first time in the history of Mughal rule, Kamrup-*cum*-Assam politics looms large in the foreign relations of the Royal Court and assumes in fact an all-India importance. The existence of the powerful and independent kingdom of Assam in the north-east, made the ever suspicious and cunning Aurangzib careful in his treatment of the nobles, especially of the Bengal *subahdar*, who held the key to Imperial policy in that distant region. *

Contemporary Mughal politics in relation to the north-east frontier affairs.

The campaign of Mir Jumla had swept over Assam like a terrible whirlwind topsyturvying the whole land, bringing plunder, pestilence and destruction in its train, and also upsetting the placid life of the nation. King Jayadhvaj Singh did not long survive the humiliation and miseries of the foreign invasion. He died sonless in November, 1663, stricken with a serious malady, and was succeeded by his cousin Sairingh Raja, who assumed the Hindu name of Chakradhvaj Singh.

Jayadhvaj Singh succeeded by Chakradhvaj Singh (1663).

The new king was capable, energetic and ambitious, and made a firm resolve to shake off the humiliating legacy of

* The *Assam Buranji from Khunlung to Gadadhar Singh* records an interesting anecdote which throws light on the importance of Assam affairs in contemporary Imperial politics. Shaista Khan is alleged to have given the following message, through an envoy, to Raja Ram Singh who was deputed to Assam in 1668 for conducting the war against king Chakradhvaj Singh, "Well, tell Ram Singh that for the fear of Assam (Raja), the honour and prestige of the *Nawabs* and Rajas have remained in tact. If that country be invaded and subjugated we shall be dishonoured as well" (*vide* Journal of Indian History, December, 1926, p. 378).

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of foreign subjugation and to avenge the national wrongs and indignities that came in its wake, by ousting the Mughals from Kamrup altogether. With this end in view, he took stock of the national position early in the reign. Though there was practically no diminution in territory as a result of Mir Jumla's raid, its effect was felt most visibly in the depletion of the material resources of his country as well as in its man-power. The soldiery was greatly thinned by war, pestilence and desertion to the side of the enemy; the navy was almost destroyed, the arsenal empty, the treasury much depleted by the cost of the war as well as the payment of the first instalment of war-indemnity, while the fortifications were all levelled down.

The new king resolved to wipe off the stain of Mughal subjection.

For four years, the Assam king played a game of great duplicity. He kept up an appearance of submission and good faith and refrained from rupturing diplomatic intercourse with the Mughals, and at the same time steadily and patiently devoted himself to recoup the national loss and prepare the country for a fresh struggle. The Ahom ruler at first made a friendly alliance with the Koch king Pran Narayan, and thereby strengthened his position.* The Raja of Darrang who had sided with Mir Jumla now resumed friendly relations with the Assam king, who afterwards subdued several wild tribes and thereby safeguarded his frontiers. He then made fortifications at various strategic points in his domain. A fort with 7 walls was made at Kaliabar, a second one at Pata Kallang (south of Kaliabar and north east of Nowgong) and a third at Samdhara, and all of these were placed under strong garrisons, while the path along the banks of the Brahmaputra up to Ghargaon was also adequately guarded.† Day and night, war-materials were prepared, war-boats fitted up, and raw recruits trained in the use of arms. The king was the soul

He maintained outwardly good relations but secretly prepared for war.

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

† *Ibid.*

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of the whole enterprise and made himself the most zealous guardian of the injured national pride and prestige. His personal interest and enthusiasm inspired courage and confidence in his subjects, and very soon the preparations for war were completed. *

While king Chakradhvaj Singh was thus busy getting ready for a decisive encounter, Rashid Khan, the *faujdar* of Kamrup, remained quite in the dark with regard to his designs. Pursuant to the spirit of the treaty of peace, the Khan sent envoys with presents to the new king, on his accession to the throne. Meantime two more messengers (with presents originally intended for the late king) arrived from the Royal Court. The Assam king at first refused to entertain them but was afterwards induced by his nobles to agree. He, however, gave the envoys a cold reception, and dismissed them with customary presents, together with a strong note accusing the Mughals of breach of the letter as well as the spirit of the treaty of peace (*e. g.*, illegal detention of the Assamese subjects and encroachment upon the acknowledged boundary of the Assam realm).

Kamrup *faujdar* Rashid Khan's envoys were coldly received by the Assam king, who charged the Imperialists with breach of treaty terms.

The Mughal Emperor appears to have been very conciliatory in his attitude, and he expressed his readiness to conform to the boundary limits existing at the time of the conquest of Kamrup in 1612. † This too failed to satisfy the Assam king and cool his martial ardour. When Rashid Khan sent an envoy demanding the balance of the war-indemnity and the annual tribute of elephants, the king refused compliance on the idle plea that the treasury was empty and that the wild elephants were yet to be trained to make them fit for despatch.

Mughal attitude conciliatory.

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 134-35.

† *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 131-32.

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The Bar Phukan's futile conspiracy with the Mughals.

Meantime the Bar Phukan (father-in-law of the Assam king), jealous of the influence of the Burha Gohain and the Bar Barua over the king, entered into a treasonable correspondence with the Mughal *faujdar* and apprised him of the hostile preparations set on foot. Though the conspiracy was nipped in the bud it exasperated the Assam king considerably.

Rashid Khan's successor Sayyid Firuz's peremptory demand for payment of arrears led to an Ahom attack on Kamrup.

Early in 1667, Rashid Khan was succeeded by Sayyid Firuz Khan as the *faujdar* of Kamrup. Vexed at the dilatoriness of the Assam king regarding the despatch of the annual tribute and the indemnity still unpaid, he sent an envoy with a peremptory letter, demanding the payment of the Imperial dues. The imperious attitude of the tactless *faujdar* added fuels to the fire, and the Assam king replied with an attack on the capital of Mughal Kamrup. *

Origin of the renewed warfare discussed.

Thus within four years of the conclusion of peace (1663), the flame of war again blazed out. The real reason for this fresh outbreak of hostilities has not hitherto been fully appreciated, and the blame for giving rise to it has been unduly laid on the shoulders of the Mughals. We must remember that the terms of the last peace were extremely favourable to the latter and they had nothing to gain by breaking the treaty and thereby provoking the Assamese to renewed warfare. On the other hand, the repeated demands for the outstanding indemnity and tributes, together with the territorial concessions voluntarily offered by the Mughal Emperor himself, show not only his anxiety to profit by the treaty-stipulations but also his sincere desire for the maintenance of peace even at a sacrifice. So the allegations of the Assam king regarding the breach of peace-terms by the Mughals do not stand a moment's scrutiny. †

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* *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 133.

† The *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 128-29, clearly tells us that before his departure from Gauhati, Mir Jumla made over all the Assamese subjects who

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The prime factor in the resumption of war was the grim determination of the Assam king to remove the stigma on the national prestige and dignity and to do away with the possibility of its future jeopardy by supplanting Mughal authority in Kamrup altogether. A daring offensive is sometimes the best defence, and the Assam king was anxious to follow this dictum by carrying the war into Mughal domain. This is abundantly clear from his gigantic war-preparations from the beginning. The various complaints against the Mughals served only as a decent plea, and the provoking letter of the Mughal *faujdar* finally gave him an excellent excuse for launching upon his patriotic enterprise.

In August, 1667, the Assam king offered sacrifices to the gods and consulted the omens with a view to beginning his campaign. These being found favourable, he gathered a large army and sent it in two divisions along the banks of the Brahmaputra, under the command of Lachit Phukan, the son of the Bar Barua, and Kaliabaria Phukan, with Gauhati as the main objective.

In August, 1667, the Assam king attacked Gauhati.

A topographical knowledge of the Mughal capital is essential at this stage for following the warfare that henceforward centred round it. The transfer of the capital from Hajo, effected soon after the peace of 1639, restored Gauhati to its former importance (when it was for a time the residence of king Parikshit) and necessitated its further strengthening and development. Though the main town continued to occupy the north bank of the Brahmaputra as it did in Parikshit's time (quite unlike its present situation on the south bank), fortified gateways were made on the north as well as on the south bank of the river. In the north, entrance to the city was guarded by five watch-posts ("choukies") set up in the passes

Topography of Gauhati.

had been forced to accompany him, to Madhab Charan, an envoy of the Ahom king. As regards boundary disputes, Aurangzib's conciliatory attitude would surely have set matters right, even if there was any ground of complaint on that score.

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of the neighbouring hills—"the Kanai-barsi-bowa chouki, the Hillar (Sillar) chouki, the Hindurighopa (Sindurighopa), Patduwar and the Korai or Pani chouki," while in the south, the five fortified outposts were "the Luttasil or Pani chouki, the Joy-duwar, the Dharum-duwar, Duwar Guria and the Pandu chouki." * Besides these small watch-posts, the city was protected by bigger fortifications as well. On the south bank of the Brahmaputra, fort Itakhuli commanded an excellent position between Joy-duwar and Luttasil chouki and was surrounded by a deep ditch. Two more fortified posts were set up in close proximity—the one at Shah Buruz near Srighat and the other at Rangmahal, both to the north of the main city and on the bank of the Bar Nadi.

In the first flush of their energy, the Assamese at first carried all before them. The northern army under the Bar Phukan directed its attack on the solitary outpost of Bansbari to the east of the Bar Nadi and captured it, securing many prisoners and a large quantity of war-implements. The Dihingia and Deka Phukans were stationed there to guard the newly acquired stronghold.

The Assamese captured fort Bansbari.

Equal success attended the early efforts of the southern army under the Kaliabaria Phukan, which moved along the Kalang, occupied the fort of Kajali and secured a rich booty there. Master of Kajali, the Assamese moved by land and water towards Itakhuli fort, and encamped near the Luttasil chouki. The attempts of the Mughals to dislodge them having proved futile, the Assamese moved towards Joy-duwar and laid siege to Itakhuli fort. A detachment was sent to invest the fort of Pandu as well. In spite of the opposition offered by the Mughal garrison, the Ahoms encamped in front of Pandu, ready to carry it by storm. †

And fort Kajali and afterwards laid seige to forts Itakhuli and Pandu.

* Martin's Eastern India, Vol. III. pp. 630-31 : Robinson's Descriptive Account of Assam, pp. 286-87.

† *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

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Meanwhile the Mughals, who had entrenched themselves in a fortification close to the enemy, made more than one futile attempt to recover fort Bansbari. To strengthen their position, a stockade was then built by the Assamese on the western bank of the Bar Nadi, opposite to the Mughal post. But before they could find time to make a firm stand there, the Mughals sprang a surprise attack and seized the Assamese stockade, putting the whole garrison, including some officers, to the sword. *

Futile Mughal attempts to recapture fort Bansbari.

This discomfiture, however, did not cool the ardour of the Assamese and had no effect on the general course of the campaign. Eager to recover their position, they crossed the Bar Nadi and made a vigorous attempt upon the Mughal fort of Rangmahal. † A hard struggle ensued in which three Assamese commanders fell. At last the garrison was defeated, and the fort fell into the hands of the enemy. ‡ Fort Shah Buruz soon followed suit.

The Assamese seized forts Rangmahal and Shah Buruz.

A number of war-ships with reinforcements having now arrived, the Mughals made a vigorous attempt to check the victorious career of the enemy, but with no success. Joy-duwar, the gateway of Itakhuli fort, was now captured by the southern army. This was followed by the fall of Itakhuli fort at the end of a siege of nearly two months (*c.* early November, 1667). A good many guns, horses and men were secured. The way to Gauhati was now clear, and it was entered in triumph by the Assamese generals about the middle of November, 1667. The Mughal *faujdar* Sayyid Firuz Khan, with Sayyid Sala and a few of his men, having fled towards the Manas river, the rest of the garrison was killed, and a rich

Fort Itakhuli and Gauhati city occupied (*c.* middle of November, 1667).

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 136-37.

† Rangmahal (now a village in Silasindurighopa *mauza*) stands on the Bar Nadi, about 2 miles to the north of the Gauhati town.

‡ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

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booty, including elephants, horses, guns and money in cash, was captured and despatched to the Assam king. *

The fall of the capital and the flight of the *faujdar* broke the back of the Mughal opposition. Forts Srighat and Agiathuti in the north and Pandu in the south were easily occupied by the Assamese, who next gave the retreating enemy a hard chase along *Dakhinkol*, moving by land and water. In course of their retreat, the Mughals made three attempts to repel their pursuers—once on the bank of the Rerowah river, † then at the mouth of the Koolsi river above Nagarberra, and afterwards at Lathari, but were repulsed each time with great slaughter. At last they reached the mouth of the Manas river, which they fortified with a view to making a stand there. The triumphant Assamese closely invested the place by land and water. The siege dragged on for a long time. The Mughals then faced the enemy in a decisive encounter but were totally defeated and their fort destroyed. The *faujdar*, with a few of his officers, was captured and sent to Ghargaon, and the rest of the men were killed. The Assamese then withdrew to Tamulihat with their prisoners, garrisoning a strong fort raised on the spot. †

Forts Srighat and Pandu were captured, and the Mughals driven towards the Manas river, (c. December, 1667).

As a result of about five months (August-December, 1667) of strenuous warfare, the Assam king succeeded in expelling the Mughals from Kamrup proper and pushing them beyond the river Manas. He next made arrangements for keeping hold of the conquered realm by erecting a number of fortified outposts on the banks of the Brahma-

Result of five months of warfare very satisfactory for the Assamese.

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*: *Purani Asama Buranji*. pp. 135-37. An inscription in Assamese on the Kanai Barsi hill to the north of Gauhati, commemorates the erection of an Ahom fort there in the month of *Agrahayana*, *Saka* 1582 (1667 A. D.), "after the defeat and death of Sana and Saiad Firuz". The *Buranjis*, however, make it clear that the Mughal *faujdar* fled after the occupation of Gauhati towards the Manas river, where he was captured.

† *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 137 : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*.

‡ The Rerowah river joins the Brahmaputra a little above Nagarberra.

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putra *e. g.*, Srighat and Shah Buruz in the north and Pandu, Dairanibai, * Kalahi † and Nagarberra in the south. Gauhati became the headquarters of the Bar Phukan—the Ahom viceroy, and its fortifications were repaired. ‡

Resumption of hostilities after three months (*c.* January-March, 1668)

After the suspension of hostilities for about three months, the Assamese, early in April, 1668, made a further attempt to drive the Mughals even from their refuge in the region west of the Manas river. One detachment was sent along *Uttarkol*, while the other, which was sent southwards, encamped at Kakphak. § This new move alarmed the Mughals, and Raja Indradaman (probably a faithful local vassal) sent a strong contingent from Rangamati to meet the Assamese. A sharp engagement followed at Kakphak, in which the Mughals were defeated and compelled to beat a hasty retreat. ‖ The news of this fresh discomfiture led the Raja to take the field in person. Unwilling to risk another encounter, the Assamese withdrew—the northern division to Srighat and the southern one to Boko. ¶ The Raja made attempts upon both the forts but without success. ❦

Arrival of Raja Ram Singh with a strong army but a weak navy in Kamrup (*c.* February, 1668).

Meanwhile the news of the defeat and capture of the Mughal *faujdar* and the loss of Gauhati had reached the Imperial Court (December, 1667). The Emperor Aurangzib resolved to retrieve his prestige and appointed Ram Singh, son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Ambar, to the command of an Imperial corps with orders to proceed towards the north-east frontier. Ram Singh was accompanied by 21 Rajput chiefs, besides some veteran officers including

* Darinagaon is in Barduar *mauza*, Dt. Kamrup.

† Kooleha stands south of Chomooreea *thanah* and south-east of Nagarberra.

‡ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

§ Khakapara, in Habraghat *mauza*. Dt. Goalpara is probably meant.

‖ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

¶ Boko is in Boko *tahsil*, about 32 miles south-west of Gauhati.

❦ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

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Rashid Khan, the ex-*faujdar* of Kamrup, and 1500 Imperial *ahadis* and 500 artillery as the nucleus of his expeditionary force. According to the Royal command, hestrengthened his ranks by troops from the Bengal contingent * and by auxiliaries from Koch Bihar, so as to gather an army totalling about 30000 infantry, 18000 Turkish cavalry (including the 4000 troopers in his own pay and 2000 horsemen supplied by the Bengal viceroy) and 15000 Koch archers. † The number of war-vessels accompanying the army was exceedingly small—totalling about forty only and chiefly manned by *Feringhis*. ‡ This naval weakness was a great handicap to Raja Ram Singh, and, more than any other thing, led to the failure of his whole enterprise. The experiences gathered in Mir Jumla's campaign were too painful to be forgotten, and no invader of the Brahmaputra valley could hope for success or even firm footing in that riverain region without an adequate fleet, which alone could ensure unbroken communication with his base.

Ram Singh took leave of the Emperor on the 27th of December, 1667, but did not reach Rangamati till February, 1668. The arrival of the Imperial force found the Assamese not quite prepared for a renewed struggle, so they once more resorted to the old trick of opening sham peace negotiations to gain time. The gallant and straightforward Rajput commander readily gave way, and put forward what he thought to be his minimum demand—the surrender of

Ram Singh's modest demand for a compromise having been rejected, warfare was resumed.

* *Alamgirnamah*, p. 1068.

† *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 138-39.

‡ The supine administration of Prince Shah Shuja leading to the ruin of the estates endowed for the maintenance of the fleet, followed by the disastrous Assam expedition of Mir Jumla, destroyed the Bengal navy altogether. Though, owing to the patient energy and organising ability of Shaista Khan, the successor of Mir Jumla, a navy worth the name was rapidly created with which the *Feringhi* and Magh pirates in south-east Bengal were effectively suppressed (January, 1666), the fear of a recurrence of hostilities was yet too real to allow the Bengal fleet to be released from that quarter for service in Assam.

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Gauhati and the restoration of other territories included in Mughal Kamrup (between the Bar Nadi in the north and the causeway of Asur in the south) by the peace treaty of 1639, in return for his withdrawal from the campaign. But the Assam king, whose appetite had come with eating, cast aside the proposal, sped up his war-measures, and arranged his army in the following order—The Burha Gohain and the Dihingia Phukan were stationed at Srighat, the Bar Patra Gohain at Kurua * and the Bar Phukan at Gauhati, while to the south of the Brahmaputra, the Bar Gohain was posted at Pandu and the Kaliabaria Phukan was to guard the causeway of Asur ; midway in the river was the Assamese fleet, under its commander, Naobaicha Phukan. †

In spite of his great preparations, the Assam king appears to have concentrated his endeavour only on the defence of Gauhati and the strategic posts around, giving up all pretensions to the territories westward of Hajo. So Ram Singh had at first an easy time. He marched from Rangamati along the north bank of the Brahmaputra, leaving at his base a few *mansabdars* including Nasir Khan, Raja Jay Singh and Sib Singh, to guard his line of communication with Bengal. Crossing the Manas quite unopposed, he reached Baruamukh ‡ and encamped there, having captured and suitably garrisoned on his way the Assamese posts at Chenga § and Tapera. ‖

Initial Mughal success—territories west of the Manas easily occupied.

Hajo was then captured without a blow. Ram Singh next moved to the sands of Koolihati, ¶ whence he advanced along the Bramhaputra to Agiathuti which was besieged. Leaving

* Kooroowah is a village about five miles to the north-east of Gauhati, just to the east of the confluence of the Bar Nadi and the Brahmaputra.

† *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 139-40.

‡ Barbarooamukh, a village in Ramdia *mauza*, about 3 or 4 miles north-west of Hajo is obviously the place meant.

§ Chenga is about 9 miles east of Barpeta.

‖ Tapabari, a village in Ramdia *mauza*, west of Hajo, is probably meant.

¶ Koolhatti is about 3 miles south-east of Hajo.

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an adequate detachment to carry on the siege operations, Ram Singh marched triumphantly to Srighat, where he encamped just at a cannon's distance from the enemy stronghold. He made two forts there, and then laid siege to Srighat as well as to the frontier post of Rangmahal.*

Capture of Hajo followed by the siege of Agiathuti, Srighat and Rangmahal forts.

The Imperial commander next deputed Raja Indradaman and Raja Jay Narain (grand-son of king Parikshit according to the *Buranjis*) to seize the Assamese outposts south of the Brahmaputra, while the Mughal fleet was stationed in the river opposite to that of the enemy. The Rajas achieved some initial success : they captured the Assamese fort of Luthari, † built a stockade of their own at "Phrenbar", ‡ and then invested the fort of Pandu.

Fort Luthari occupied and Pandu invested by the Mughals.

The sieges of Srighat, Agiathuti and Pandu dragged on for long but without any decisive result. It was high time for the Assamese to rise from their torpor and attempt to check the success of the Mughals. They compelled the latter to withdraw the siege of Rangmahal and then attempted to recapture Luthari, making a stockade in front of it. They next repulsed an attack on their own fort of Akur, § recaptured the outpost of Chenga and occupied Phrenbar, securing many guns in the latter fort. An assault on their newly made post at Luthari was also met, causing great loss to the Mughals. ‖ In a naval skirmish too, the Assamese got the better of their opponents and destroyed two of their ships.

The Assamese compelled the Mughals to raise the siege of Rangmahal and captured the forts of Chenga and Phrenbar.

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* *Purani Asama Buranji.* p. 140 : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

† Lataria in Choomoreea *mauza*, District Kamrup, seems to be the place.

‡ Paerenga in Nij Boko *mauza*, south of Choomoreea, is probably meant.

§ Augardi in Uttar Bar Kshetri *mauza*, west of Hajo, is obviously referred to.

‖ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

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The rainy season (1669) then drew near. With its advent, the Assamese found themselves in their own element and there was a marked change in their favour. Though they had scored a few victories and had resolutely stuck to their strongholds of Agiathuti, Srighat and Pandu, in face of the protracted siege by the Mughals, the balance of fighting for the three months preceding the rains (February-April, 1669) was distinctly in favour of the latter. The Mughals had triumphantly marched to the borders of Kamrup and had confined the Assamese to a few strongholds around Gauhati, the fall of which soon appeared to be imminent.

The rains of 1669 brought about a change in the course of the war.

But now the discomfiture of the Mughals was to begin. As soon as the rains set in, Raja Ram Singh withdrew with his main army to Hajo (entrusting the continuance of siege operations to his officers), and being anxious to retain communication with the fleet ordered it to move down to Sualkochi. *

Ram Singh withdrew to Hajo and the fleet moved to Sualkochi.

To make matters worse, dissensions and insubordination now reigned in the Imperialist camp to the great detriment of the common cause. A quarrel broke out between the Kamrup *faujdar* and the Imperial officer Ram Singh regarding their status. The former, claiming equal rank with the latter, would not take his orders from or act in conjunction with him. He was also suspected of being in secret correspondence with the Ahoms. Finding him incorrigible, Ram Singh cut the tent ropes of the disloyal *faujdar* and expelled him from his camp. †

Dissensions in Mughal camp.

The Assam king now exhorted his officers to make a vigorous attack upon the Imperialists by land and water. The Burha Gohain moved to Agiathuti and the Bar Phukan made a fort

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

† *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 141-42.

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at "Elamang" * (north of Gauhati). The combined attack was then made by the Burha Gohain on the Mughals near Agiathuti, who were defeated after a hard struggle. A large number of the enemy were captured and three of the stockades at "Banpinka" † seized by the Assamese. ‡ This was their first great victory since the arrival of Ram Singh, and its moral effect was tremendous.

Assamese victory at Agiathuti and Banpinka.

Meantime the rains ceased and the Mughals once more took the field in earnest. But further disappointments were in store for them. A double engagement was fought near Sindoorighopa, § which ended in the success of the Assamese. ‖

And at Sindoorighopa.

An elaborate attempt to blow up the Ahom fort of Pandu by a mine laid on its south-west followed, but, owing to the vigilance and circumspection of the local commander, this bore no fruit. As soon as the fort toppled down it was repaired. A similar attempt to destroy the fort of Srighat was nipped in the bud and four of the Mughal wooden stockades were pulled down with great loss by the Assamese. ¶ They next captured a half-finished fort near "Lathia" ⁋ and secured some munition and prisoners as booty. $ The Mughals in their turn went up the Brahmaputra and attacked Darrang in order to create a diversion in their favour. The Queen mother of the (young) Darrang Raja, secretly instructed by the

Followed by Mughal failure in Pandu and Srighat and also in Darrang.

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* Lenga, a village in Barbangsar *mauza*, about 5 miles to the north of Gauhati, is probably referred to here.

† Probably the same as Banpara in Barkshetri *mauza*, westward of Hajo.

‡ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

§ Sindoorighopa is about 8 miles to the east of Hajo and about 5 miles north-west of Gauhati.

‖ *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 142.

¶ *Ibid*, pp. 142-43,

⁋ Is it the same place as Luthari ?

$ *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 142-43.

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Bar Phukan, lured them into a pass between two hills and cut them down getting large spoils. *

These repeated disasters taxed hard the patience, energy and resources of Raja Ram Singh, and he attempted to come to terms with the Assam king through the Bar Phukan. † But greatly emboldened by the series of triumphs lately gained, the king refused compliance and prepared with greater vigour for a final trial of strength. A grand attack was made (by land and water) on the Mughals near the Sesa river, not far from Agiathuti, in the absence of the Imperial commander. The Assamese at first won signal success. A large number of the enemy fell in battle, and the whole garrison at Agiathuti was put to the sword. But the arrival of Ram Singh at that juncture changed the course of the combat. He inflicted a serious defeat on the Assamese land army and then threatened to take their fleet by the rear, compelling the Bar Phukan to retire leaving all his ships behind. ‡

Peace overtures rejected by the Assam king, who soon sustained a double defeat near the Sesa river.

This double reverse was a severe set-back to the Assam king and toned down his zeal for further warfare. Ram Singh too, anxious to take advantage of this opportune moment, renewed his peace overtures. Both sides being equally sick of the protracted warfare (which had dragged on for ten months—February to November, 1669), hostilities were suspended and negotiations seriously began. In the midst of this peace move, the Assam king died (*c.* December, 1669).

Peace negotiations seriously began and hostilities were suspended.

Chakradhvaj Singh was succeeded by his brother, known by his Hindu name as Udayaditya Singh. The new king imbibed the ability, energy and patriotism of his predecessor and was destined to give a finishing touch to his work by the eviction of the Mughals from Kamrup.

Chakradhvaj Singh succeeded by Udayaditya (*c.* December, 1669).

* *Purani Asama Buranji* p. 143.

† *Ibid* : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

‡ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

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Though the sudden demise of the war-worn Assam king boded ill for the future of the peace efforts, it would be a mistake to suppose that his successor alone was responsible for their breakdown. In fact, the peace negotiations continued uninterruptedly under his auspices. Raja Ram Singh put the Mughal case very precisely, and proposed that the frontier delimited by the peace of 1639 should be restored * by the Assamese, who would receive in exchange for the territorial concessions and by way of the cost of fortifications made by them, an indemnity of three *lakhs* of rupees only. †

Continuance of peace negotiations.

In his great eagerness and sincere desire for ending the war with an honourable peace, the Imperial commander appears to have flattered himself with the belief that the terms offered by him were too reasonable and conciliatory for the Assamese to refuse, and he attempted to overcome their objections by means of solemn oaths and profuse swearings to stick to his proposal. But the circumstances of the time showed that his outlook was too bold and optimistic. Seven years before (*i. e.*, immediately after the Assam campaign of Mir Jumla), the Assamese would have warmly greeted the proposal as really moderate. But much water had flowed down the Brahmaputra since that event, and, in spite of their recent reverses, the Assamese were just then in actual possession not only of the capital of Mughal Kamrup but also of its surrounding strategic posts (Srighat, Agiathuti, Pandu etc.). The acceptance of the Mughal terms would have meant the voluntary evacuation of all these places and the throwing away for good of the best fruits of the victories achieved during the last regime. This was too bitter a pill for the new king to swallow without demur.

Mughal proposal to revert to the boundary limits of 1639 not acceptable to the Assamese who were in actual possession of Gauhati and the places around.

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* *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 144 : *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

† *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 144.

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Further, the Burha Gohain and the Bar Phukan—the two accredited representatives of the Assam king, appear to have been rather sceptical as to whether the terms put forward by Ram Singh would receive the approbation of the Mughal Court, and so deliberately put off a reply on various idle pretexts. The negotiations having dragged on for a pretty long time, * Ram Singh, on his part, naturally became suspicious as to the *bonafides* of the peace motive of the Assamese.

Dilatoriness of the Ahom officers with regard to the acceptance of peace terms.

At that moment, the arrival of re-inforcement including a few war-vessels under three Imperial officers and the cruising admiral Munawwar Khan, sealed the fate of the peace negotiations. The energetic Bengal zaminder (Munawwar Khan) overcame whatever pacific desire was left in Ram Singh, bore down his war-weariness and induced him to break the lull in fighting by a daring attack on the heart of the Ahom territory. †

Arrival of reinforcements to Ram Singh.

Encouraged by the bestowal of Royal favour in the shape of a promotion in his ranks ‡ as well as by the strengthening of his resources, Ram Singh, early in March, 1670, moved along the Brahmaputra to "Kamden" § (near Sualkochi), and thence advanced with his ships to "Sitamani." ‖ A detachment was then sent to Darrang and another to the *Dakhinkol* region. ¶

The Mughals resumed warfare and advanced to Sitamani.

Apprised of the bold and rapid movement of the Mughals, the Assam king ordered the immediate strengthening of his

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 144-46.

† *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

‡ *Masir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 97.

§ Kandalpara in Saru Bangsar *mauza*, south of Hajo, seems to be the modern equivalent.

‖ Sheetolmahree, about 34 miles north-east of Gauhati, on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, Dt. Nowgong, appears to be the place referred to.

¶ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

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fortifications, and asked the Burha Gohain to move without delay from Samdhara towards Srighat with 20000 men. Alarmed at the possibility of the cutting off of his line of communications from behind, Ram Singh hastily retraced his steps leaving some of his officers behind. He came back to the region of the "Juria hills," * and then moved with his ships to the sands of "Andhari," † carrying the horses in boats. ‡

But soon fell back upon the vicinity of Gauhati.

It was rather an inopportune moment for the Assamese. The Bar Phukan and the admiral of the fleet were both lying seriously ill, and the chief command was given to Nara Raja. The Ahom fleet was stationed near Aswakranta § in the vicinity of which a double engagement ensued. On land, the Assamese got the better of their opponents killing a great number of them. But in the naval encounter, the Mughal fleet prevailed over the Ahom ships, and compelled them to retreat to "Barhila." ‖ The defeat and retirement of the navy disheartened the land army, and it also fell back. ¶

A double encounter ensued in which the Assamese army and the fleet were defeated.

The news of this discomfiture led the heroic Bar Phukan to leave his sick-bed and rally the army and the navy for a fresh encounter. Meanwhile reinforcements from Rangmahal reached him. A decisive naval battle soon took place near Srighat, in which the wily Assamese chief had recourse to a trick that was crowned with complete success. He managed to send a few of his men with some ships to make a show of an attack upon the Mughal fleet from the

Decisive naval victory of the reinforced Assamese at Srighat.

* Probably the hill to the west of the modern Gauhati is meant.

† Obviously one of the many sandy islands in the Brahmaputra in the vicinity of Gauhati.

‡ *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 148.

§ The temple of Aswakranta stands on a rocky promontory on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, opposite to Gauhati.

‖ Barhata in Patidarrang *mauza*, north of Srighat is probably the place meant.

¶ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

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front, throwing it off its scent and luring it to move forward careless of the rear, while he himself with the main army and the fleet remained behind to take the enemy by surprise. The Mughal admiral Sarif Khan swallowed the bait and proceeded unwarily with his ships, when he was killed by a gun shot from the rear. His sudden demise threw the Mughal fleet into great disorder. The men were panic-stricken and could not be rallied again. There was hardly a battle but a mere rout. The Assamese army from both banks of the river wrought a great havoc on the helpless sailors to whom no quarter was given. *

After this serious defeat, Ram Singh withdrew westward with great difficulty and halted at Pacharia. † To crown the misfortune of the Imperialists, "Ghora Kunwar", an officer of the Assamese outpost on the "Chechanai river", ‡ east of Hajo, made a surprise attack (by land and water) on some of the retreating Mughals and massacred them all. §

Followed by another triumph on the Sesa river.

The Mughal detachments in Darrang and in *Dakhinkol* fared no better. In the latter region, they had set fire to some of the dwellings of the Garos and the hill-men now retaliated. Next, the Rani Raja massacred a number of the invaders at "Kapili", ‖ and the survivors fled to the mouth of the "Haran" river ¶ (whence they moved down the Kalang and the Brahmaputra to join the main army).

Mughal reverses in *Dakhinkol*.

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* *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 147-49. This is the memorable battle of Saraighat, so famous in Assamese histories and legends.

† Pacharia is in Saru Bansar *mauza*, south of Hajo.

‡ The Seinsa river, Dt. Nowgong, is obviously meant, which in Robinson's Map is termed as "Chencha river".

§ *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 149.

‖ Kapili river joins the Kalang near *thanah* Jagi (Dt. Nowgong), about 18 miles due south of Sheetohmahree and 30 miles due east of Gauhati.

¶ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.* Hari or Nanai river joins the Kalang at Raha, about 29 miles south-east of Sheetohmaree and 16 miles north-east of Jagi.

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The repeated defeats with the concomitant losses so much weakened the position of the Imperialists that Ram Singh was at last compelled to withdraw from the struggle after about a year's vain endeavour to recover Kamrup. In March, 1671, he recrossed the Manas and returned to Rangamati, with the loss of about 4000 men (wounded and dead). *

Ram Singh's withdrawal from Kamrup to Rangamati (*c.* March, 1671).

The news of the retreat of the Mughal host was received with great joy by the Assam king, who loaded the Bar Phukan and other officers with rewards. Arrangements were again made for the security of the territories reconquered. A fort was made at the confluence of the Manas with the Brahmaputra near Jogighopa, another opposite to it on the south bank of the river at "Hadira", † and the *Uttarkol* and *Dakhinkol* regions were then entrusted to "Chandra Narayan" (rather Surjya Narayan, grand-son of Bali Narayan) and "Gandharba Narayan" (the chief of Beltala) respectively, as tributary chiefs. ‡

Assamese administrative arrangements of the reconquered territories.

The Assam king did not live long to reap the fruits of his well-earned victory. He fell a victim to a palace conspiracy set up in the interest of his younger brother, and was deposed and ultimately poisoned to death in August, 1673.

Death of Udayaditya, August, 1673.

The unnatural death of Udayaditya opened the flood-gate of anarchy and confusion in Ahom politics; an era of weak and incompetent princes—merely tools in the hands of ambitious and unscrupulous king-makers (Debera—the Bar Barua and the Burha Gohain) now began. In four years, no less than four kings passed over the political arena in quick succession,

Confusion in Ahom state.

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*: *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 150.

† Chandaria, just south of Goalpara town, is obviously referred to. There seems now to be no place named Hadira in the vicinity.

‡ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

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only to perish by poison or the knife of the assassin, till in July, 1677, a grand-son of a former king was installed to the royal dignity under the Ahom name of Sudaipha.

The new king owed his elevation to power solely to the good graces of the Burha Gohain (whose son-in-law he was) and became entirely subservient to him. This roused the envy and jealousy of the other dignitaries of the state, especially the Bar Barua and the Bar Phukan. Anxious to retain his power and uproot all his enemies, the Burha Gohain dismissed the Bar Barua and then sought for an opportunity for removing the Bar Phukan too from office. To consolidate and strengthen his position further, the Burha Gohain, in the middle of 1678, set himself to establish some fortified posts. One was made near the Sesa river, another in the vicinity of Pandu at Chaigaon, yet another at Sitamani. *

Tyranny of the Burha Gohain.

The military activities of the Burha Gohain served only to confirm his hostile intention towards his opponents. The Bar Phukan was now joined by the Baduli Phukan and other officers, and it was found that the only way to escape from the tyranny of the Burha Gohain was to seek the help of the Bengal viceroy. Prince Muhammad Azam was accordingly approached by the Bar Phukan, who agreed to hand over Gauhati to him as the price of his friendly intervention. To keep up an honest appearance, the Bar Phukan at the same time asked for war-materials from the Burha Gohain for warding off the common enemy.

Gauhati offered by the Bar Phukan in exchange for Mughal help against the tyrant.

The treasonable conspiracy was divulged too late for the Burha Gohain and the king to frustrate it. An army was hastily raised and divided into two parts, one of which was stationed at Sitamani fort, while the other was sent to resist the advance of the Mughals. But before any effective action could be taken, the forts of Srighat, Tamulihat

Speedy surrender of Srighat and Gauhati to the Mughals (February, 1679).

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.*

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and Gauhati were all betrayed into their hands by the Bar Phukan and his party. This was at the end of February, 1679. * Profiting by their bitter experience, the Mughals did not proceed further but merely attempted to keep hold of their new prize.

Thus after the lapse of about twelve years, the Mughals became once more the master of Gauhati and in fact of the whole of Kamrup without a blow. It was really an irony of fate that what five years of strenuous warfare could not achieve was gained so easily owing to a freak of fortune. The welcome news reached the Mughal Emperor, on the 1st of March, 1679, while he was on the threshold of the fateful Rajput war. The ignominious sale of Gauhati was magnified into a glorious conquest at the Royal Court, and the fortunate hero of this tragi-comedy—Prince Muhammad Azam, was the recipient of magnificent presents. †

It is indeed surprising to note that the Mughals should have failed to take advantage of the prolonged weakness and confusion in the Ahom state to renew their efforts to recover Kamrup, depending only on fickle chance, the more so, in view of the fact that a general of Ram Singh's ability, tact, tenacity and valour stayed on at Rangamati for the greater part of this period (1671-76). The reason for this strange inaction and also for the lull in Assamese warfare is to be sought partly in the troubled state of contemporary Imperial politics and partly in Aurangzib's dubious attitude towards Ram Singh and his family.

Lull in the warfare and the strange inaction of Raja Ram Singh at Rangamati explained.

In 1672 there was a formidable Afghan rising in the north-west frontier "from Qandahar to Attock", which kept Aurangzib quite busy for about four years, it having been brought under control only at the end of 1675. Before the embers of Afghan insurrection had died down, the Emperor was threatened with

Complications in contemporary Imperial politics.

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai : Purani Asama Buranji.* p. 154.

† *Masir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 173.

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a fresh danger owing to the feverish activities of Shivaji, the great Maratha, who "swept through Golkonda to Karnatak and back again through Bijapur and Raigarh in a dazzling succession of triumphs, during the eighteen months following December 1676." Aurangzib's hands were thus quite full, and he could scarcely think of restoring his authority in the north-east frontier.

The one man who could have made another attempt in that direction and was also on the spot was Raja Ram Singh. But the Emperor had completely alienated his sympathy and loyalty by his own suspicious and deceitful attitude. "There is reason to believe that Ram Singh was sent to Assam as a punishment for his having secretly helped Shivaji to escape captivity at Agra," and his enforced stay amidst the pestilential airs of Assam "where service was extremely unpopular", in spite of his repeated failures, serves only to confirm that view. Further, if the evidence of the *Purani Asama Buranji* * and the *Assam Buranji from Khunlung to Gadadhar Singh* † is to be believed, the vindictive and sneakish treatment meted out to the young son of Ram Singh by Aurangzib (clearly revealed in an interesting letter addressed to the Rajput commander by his angry and injured wife) completed the estrangement of the valiant chief and made him totally averse to any more exertions on behalf of his ungrateful master. Heartily sick of the protracted warfare and particularly of service under the wily Emperor, Ram Singh lingered on at Rangamati till 1676, when he was permitted to return, only to die soon after.

Aurangzib's suspicious and ungenerous treatment of Ram Singh and his family.

Master of Gauhati, the Mughals appear to have made no efforts to back up the cause of the Bar Phukan. He was thus left to his fate. For a moment he fared well. In the midst of the confusion caused by the appearance of the Mughals, he gathered an army with which he marched up the Brahmaputra

Continued political confusion in Assam.

* See p. 147.

† Journal of Indian History, December, 1926, pp. 377-78.

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to hunt down the Burha Gohain. The latter fled to Kaliabar, leaving the Bar Phukan master of the situation. The helpless Ahom king made a vain effort to seize the traitor but failed and was soon put to death (*c.* November, 1679). The Bar Phukan then set up a boy on the throne, commonly known as the Lara Raja, and himself became the *de facto* king. His overweening arrogance, however, soon set the other nobles against him, and he was assassinated, thus making room for another Bar Phukan. All his sons and brothers shared his fate, except one, Bhatdhara Phukan, who fled from Kaliabar in a boat at dead of night to the Mughal camp. The latter next attempted to induce the Mughal commander to give him military help to avenge his brother's death, but this proved futile. *

The boy-king soon proved himself to be incompetent and tyrannical. The new Bar Phukan headed a popular rising against him in favour of one Gadapani, son of a former ruler, and Lara Raja was ultimately put to death (1681). Gadapani then ascended the throne under the Hindu name of Gadadhar Singh.

Death of Lara Raja (1681).

The accession of Gadadhar Singh marks a turning point not only in the history of Assam but also in that of Ahom-Mughal politics. The dark days of puppet kings and powerful king-makers who inaugurated a veritable reign of terror, were over, and a new era of strong and competent rulers, quite fit to control the turbulent nobles within and to repel invasions from without, now sets in. The changed state of affairs was soon felt in the sphere of foreign affairs, where Mughal pretensions to Kamrup received a death-blow.

Accession of Gadadhar Singh ushered in a new era of strong government.

Gadadhar Singh's earliest attempts were directed to the recapture of Gauhati and the restoration of the conquests

* *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 154-156.

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of Chakradhvaj Singh. In June, 1682, he held a great council of war and there settled his plan of operations. A grand army was despatched under the command of the Bar Barua from Kaliabar to move down the Brahmaputra towards Gauhati, in co-operation with the fleet.

The new king sends a large army to recapture Gauhati.

The Assamese met with very little opposition. The reason is not far to seek. The Mughal Emperor had at that time too many irons in the fire to think of safeguarding his north-eastern frontier. Before the Rajput war could be brought to a successful end, the rebellion of Prince Akbar and his junction with Shambhaji raised a very serious danger, the warding off of which necessitated a concentration of all his energy and forces in the Deccan. The Bengal viceroy too was now fully pre-occupied with his disputes with the English East India Company and was not in a position to strengthen the Mughal cause in Kamrup, which now appears to have been in the hands of one, Mansur Khan, and his able lieutenant Ali Akbar. *

Imperial pre-occupations and their influence on Kamrup affairs.

Fort Bansbari in the north and fort Kajali to the south of the Brahmaputra were captured by the Assamese without a blow, † a large number of war-boats, horses and some munition having been secured in the latter. ‡ The overwhelming numerical strength of the Ahoms struck such a terror into the heart of the Mughal garrisons at Kurua and Panihati § that they hastily fled to the main stronghold of Gauhati, and the men of Joy-duwar too fell back on Itakhuli, without offering any resistance. ‖

Forts Bansbari and Kajali were captured and Joy-duwar surrendered to the Assamese.

* *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 158.

† *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai*: *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 158.

‡ *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 158.

§ Paneekhati, about 4½ miles east of Gauhati and about the same distance from Kajali, occupies the south bank of the Brahmaputra opposite to Koorooah (*vide* Robinson's Map).

‖ *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 159.

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It now remained for the Assamese to storm the forts of Shah Buruz and Itakhuli in order to make themselves the master of Gauhati. The army and the navy were accordingly arranged in the following order. North of the Brahmaputra, the Bar Gohain, the Bar Phukan, the Sadiyakhoa Gohain, the Marangia Gohain and others were posted near the Shah Buruz fort, while on the south bank, the Bar Barua (the commander-in-chief), the Sairingh Phukan and others were entrenched in the hill-fort of Sarania.* The Assamese fleet was stationed midway, in the river, under the admiral—Pani Phukan.† The Mughals concentrated all their attention on the defence of Itakhuli which held the key to Gauhati. Big guns were mounted in their outpost at Umananda‡ (in the middle of the river) to work in co-operation with the fleet, under one "Jayanta Singh."

Disposition of the Assamese and the Mughal forces for the contest for Gauhati.

The one serious battle on land was fought in front of the Assamese fort of Sarania. Ali Akbar, the commandant of Itakhuli fort, made a vigorous attack on the enemy stronghold with his men. In the fever-heat of excitement, the Mughal cavalry got down from the horses and rushed on foot to break the fort-walls, but failed to get success. At last Ali Akbar was compelled to give up fighting, and he retreated to his own fort with great loss of men.§ The Assamese then laid siege to Itakhuli and built a stockade in front so as to prevent ingress and egress from it. The Mughal garrison was soon reduced to a miserable plight.‖

Mughal commander of Itakhuli was defeated near the Assamese hill-fort of Sarania and his post besieged.

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* The Sarania hill lies off Ujanbazar to the east of the modern Gauhati.

† *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 159.

‡ A picturesque rocky island in the middle of the Brahmaputra (north of Gauhati) and the seat of a Hindu temple.

§ *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 159.

‖ *Ibid.*

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Meanwhile a naval encounter took place (near Pani-duwar, which commanded the way to Itakhuli fort probably from the west) in which the Assamese got the better of their enemy. The Mughal admiral fell fighting, and a large number of war-boats, big and small, were secured as booty. *

Mughal naval reverse near Pani-duwar.

The disastrous naval battle sealed the fate of the Mughals. Bereft of the help of the navy, the garrison at Itakhuli was threatened with utter destruction. In the early hours of an August morning, the desperate Mughal commandant evacuated the fort with his men, † and crossing the Brahmaputra (to the north bank) went to the place of the *faujdar*. A flight having been decided upon, Mansur Khan and Ali Akbar stealthily left Gauhati in a few *ghrab* boats for Rangamati, while Raja Indradaman and others, with the cavalry, fled by land. ‡

Fort Itakhuli and Gauhati city evacuated.

The Assamese at once entered the deserted fort (Itakhuli) and the city of Gauhati in triumph. A vast amount of booty, almost unprecedented in the annals of the victors, was secured, including pearls, gold, silver, copper, brass, lead, elephants, camels, horses, buffaloes, oxen, cannon of all sizes, guns, spears, swords, bows and arrows and war-boats. § The Bar Phukan remained in possession of Gauhati, while the Bar Barua pursued the retreating Mughals across the Manas up to Rangamati, and then returned with a good many captives. ‖

A rich booty captured by the Assamese who drove away the Mughals up to Rangamati.

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* *Purani Asama Buranji*, p. 159.

† *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Purani Asama Buranji*. p. 159.

‡ *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 159-160.

§ *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* : *Purani Asama Buranji*, pp. 156-57, 160.

‖ The *Masir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 387, tells us of Prince Muhammad "Azim's" appointment as "*subahdar* of Bengal and *faujdar* of Kooch Bihar" at the end of 1108 A. H. (middle of 1697 A. D.) The omission of any reference to Kamrup in this connection is very significant.

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The evacuated territories were speedily occupied by the Assamese and arrangements made for keeping hold of them. New fortifications were raised and old ones repaired, and the whole realm was placed under the administration of the Bar Phukan, who was stationed at Gauhati. Kamrup lost its separate existence and was merged in the Ahom kingdom. *

Kamrup finally lost to Mughal India.

The *faujdari* of Kamrup having disappeared for ever from Mughal history, Rangamati (situated near the eastern bend of the Brahmaputra, north of Dhubri) became henceforward the Imperial frontier post in the north-east. †

As a result of two months of warfare, the Mughals were again driven from Kamrup, only three years and five months after its last occupation. This incident would have figured only as an episode in the history of Ahom-Mughal warfare, unworthy of special consideration, had it not been for the fact that this was destined to be the last stage in the great political duel between the two powers. The Mughal Emperor, engaged in his death-grapple in the Deccan, was quite powerless to make any more attempt to recover the possessions in the distant north-east frontier during his own lifetime. Even before Aurangzib's death, the grand fabric of the empire was already showing signs of collapse, and his weak successors, busy with their internal affairs, could not think of taking up his unfinished work anew. Hence the capture of Gauhati (1682) is an event of more than passing significance not only in the history of Ahom-Mughal politics but

Great significance of the fall of Gauhati, 1682—it symbolised the end of the age-long duel between Assam and Mughal India.

* The *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* gives a brief account of the campaign of 1682, which is dealt with clearly and exhaustively only in the *Purani Asama Buranji* (pp. 156-57, 158-60).

† Dr. Buchanan Hamilton tells us (Martin's Eastern India, Vol. III. pp. 471-72), "In Major Rennell's time, Rangamati would appear to have been a large town... The only traces of public buildings are those of a fort and a mosque." Gait (Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, p. 9) records a Persian inscription on a mosque on the Rangamati Hill, saying that it was built in the reign of the Emperor Alamgir in 1100 A. H. (1689 A. D.)

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also in that of Mughal rule in India, and it is a pity that historians have hitherto bestowed so very little attention on it. *

The long-drawn conflict between the Mughals and the Assam king now ended in the triumph of the latter. The immediate losses in men and materials were certainly great to the vanquished. But the ultimate results were far more deplorable. Rich in its natural resources, Kamrup—the gateway of valuable trade and commerce with the north-east, now passed for ever into the hands of the Assamese. The object of more than seven decades of warfare and diplomacy was now irretrievably gone, and the prestige of Mughal arms and of the government was greatly lowered. After having been a part and parcel of the Mughal empire for almost three-quarters of a century (with some intermissions *e. g.*, 1658-1661, 1667-78), Kamrup was finally torn away from it.

Effect of the long warfare on the Mughals.

What was lost to the Mughals was gained by the Assamese. The bug-bear of Mughal imperialism was now removed and the protracted passage of arms and diplomacy at last reached its end. By the permanent acquisition of Kamrup, the western frontier of the Ahom kingdom was considerably pushed forward and its position greatly strengthened. Apart from the territorial gains, the moral effect of the final victory was tremendous. That a small half-civilised Mongoloid frontier state should have scored a decisive triumph over the great Mughal empire, yet ostensibly in its heyday of glory and prosperity, was a contingency which must have baffled all calculations. The victory of the Assamese over the Mughals proclaimed the ultimate triumph of nationalism and patriotism over imperialism and alien rule. The

And on the Assamese.

* The warfare of 1682, which resulted in the recapture of Gauhati by the Assamese, is not even mentioned by the author of the *Masir-i-Alamgiri* and the other Muhammadan writers, as probably too unpalatable an incident to be recorded. But in p. 234 of the *Masir*, we might probably read a vague allusion to it. The viceroy of Bengal was ordered to meet "the expenses incurred in Gauhati," amounting to seven *lakhs* of rupees, from the revenue of that *subah*.

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Assamese emerged from the struggle with great self-confidence, prestige and ambition, and this made possible the vast preparations for an aggressive warfare (against the Mughals) in the reign of Rudra Singh, the famous son and successor of Gadadhar Singh, which were only rendered futile by his sudden death.*

The last act in the great historic drama ended in a tragedy, and the full effect of the reaction set on foot by Mir Jumla's aggressive campaign was now felt in the total collapse of Imperial authority in the north-east frontier. While the Mughals were on the whole successful in maintaining peace and authority in the north-western border, their attempt to attain natural frontiers in the north-east thus ended in a fiasco. The loss of Kamrup added one more to the long list of failures which were credited to Aurangzib in his political career, and, with it, one of the solid stones of the great fabric of his empire slipped away unnoticed.

Place of Kamrup episode in the history of Mughal India.

* For details see Gait's History of Assam, pp. 180-81.

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CHAPTER VIII.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.

I have now brought my review of Mughal contact with Koch Bihar, Kamrup and Assam down to the end of the seventeenth century. The relation of Mughal India with the Mongoloid states on its north-eastern border which began only with the conquest of Bengal by Akbar at the beginning of the last quarter of the sixteenth century, gradually waxed into great prominence during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, reached its climacteric in the early years of Aurangzib's rule and waned into insignificance and obscurity during the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

In the preceding chapters, I have dealt in some detail with the origin, growth and final form which Mughal policy assumed, during this period of more than a century, with regard to each of the frontier states (Koch Bihar, Kamrup and Assam) in a separate manner. But, as has already been noted, the history of Mughal relation with these different kingdoms is, in its essence, the story of the gradual evolution of one organic whole—the north-eastern frontier policy of Mughal India.

History of Mughal relation with Koch Bihar, Kamrup and Assam is, in its essence, the history of the north-eastern frontier policy of Mughal India.

Mughal policy in the north-east frontier passed through several well-defined phases during this long period. The necessity for consolidating the Imperial authority over the newly acquired province of Bengal in the face of serious Afghan menace, led to the initiation of a policy of friendly alliance by the Mughal Emperor Akbar with Nara Narayan, the powerful and independent ruler of the state of Koch Bihar on the north-east. It was entirely a defensive policy in its origin, but the kaleidoscopic changes in Koch politics soon paved the way for a gradual transformation

Its various phases :—(a) Policy of defensive alliance (with Koch Bihar), 1576-96.

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in its character. The division of the Koch kingdom into two parts, with the inevitable rivalry, jealousy and hostility which it gave rise to, weakened both the states and made them equally anxious to enlist supporters on their side. While Lakshmi Narayan, the weak and indolent son and successor of Nara Narayan, looked up to the Mughals for help, his able cousin and antagonist Raghu Deb, the founder of the state of Kamrup, entered into an alliance with one of the most powerful enemies of the Mughals—Isa Khan, the Afghan chief of south-eastern Bengal. The Mughals and the Afghans were now drawn into the whirlpool of Koch politics apparently as arbiters, but really to fight their own issues on foreign soil as allies of rival powers, just as in the Carnatic wars, the English and the French fought to a finish the question of political supremacy in India, while engaged ostensibly in the petty dynastic disputes of a few South Indian potentates.

(b) Policy of subordinate alliance (with Koch Bihar), 1596-1608.

The successful intervention in Koch affairs was fraught with far-reaching consequences for the Mughals, for, it speedily changed the defensive character of their north-eastern frontier policy. The Mughals emerged out of the Koch warfare completely changed in their political status and outlook. While, on the one hand, the weakness and growing dependence of the Koch Bihar king on his powerful allies, as against the persistent hereditary hostility of the rival Kamrup dynasts, cut at the root of the original independent alliance and degraded it into one of formal subjection about the end of the sixteenth century, it, on the other hand, raised a natural ambition in the mind of the Mughals to perpetuate their political power and influence in the strategic region of the north-east.

Mughal policy thus imperceptibly took an aggressive turn. This new phase of policy was carried into effect during the early years of the reign of Jahangir, under the auspices of the able and ambitious Bengal viceroy, Alau-d din Islam Khan. Steeped in imperialistic ideas and firm in the enjoyment

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of the Emperor's confidence, the new *subahdar* on the completion of the task of consolidation of authority at home, turned the helm of foreign affairs in the north-east in a new direction. He established Mughal political influence in Koch Bihar on a solid basis by turning the subordinate alliance into abject vassalage on the part of its king. Not satisfied with the assumption of sovereign authority over the Koch Bihar state, he resolved to extend the bounds of the Mughal empire in the north-east by the conquest of the rich but defenceless state of Kamrup, then under the fickle and tactless king Parikshit Narayan. He utilised the bitter hostilities of the rival dynasts to play off one against the other, and enlisted the support of the Koch Bihar king in his campaign against the ruler of Kamrup with a vague promise of territorial gain. The policy of *divide et impera* which Aurangzib adopted with regard to the north-western frontier was thus long anticipated by the crafty Bengal viceroy of Jahangir in dealing with the north-eastern border problem of Mughal India.

(*c*) Policy of aggressive imperialism (towards Koch Bihar and its offshoot Kamrup as well as Assam), 1608-1617.

The Kamrup war was the first visible symbol of the great transformation which had taken place in Mughal north-east frontier policy. Originally a defensive diplomatic weapon, it now turned into an engine of armed imperialism and of aggressive territorial expansion. For a time, the new policy attained splendid success. In less than a year's vigorous fighting, Kamrup was conquered and annexed to the Mughal empire.

Hardly had the Mughals established their authority over the newly conquered realm than they were carried away by their imperialistic ambition and thirst for trade and commerce to make an indiscreet attack upon the rich and prosperous domain of the neighbouring king of Assam. The unprovoked invasion ended, however, in a great disaster.

It was the first set-back to Mughal imperialism in the north-east, and the bitter lesson learnt was not soon forgotten. The

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Mughals gave up their aggressive designs and turned towards the consolidation of authority in their new province of Kamrup. For more than a decade and a half (1612-27), Kamrup kept its victors busy over broad problems of policy and administration. The necessity for keeping hold of the country by safeguarding it against enemies within and without, brought about a change in the Imperial policy. It became essentially defensive and constructive. The Koch king Lakshmi Narayan, who had been put in confinement, was now released and reinstated to power and made to bask in the sunshine of Imperial favour. Troubles with the Ahom state were scrupulously avoided and no further encroachment upon it was countenanced. In Kamrup, the Mughals were, however, engaged in almost incessant warfare against local Koch rebels and the numerous hill-chieftains of *Dakhinkol*, who were aided and abetted (in their insurrections) by Bali Narayan of Darrang and his suzerain, the Assam king. Thanks to the indefatigable energy and perseverance of the officers in Kamrup, notably Mirza Nathan, a semblance of peace and order was established about the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth century.

(d) Policy of peace and consolidation (in Koch Bihar and Kamrup) and defence (towards Assam), 1612-1627.

But Kamrup proved to be far from a bed of roses to the Mughals. Though it was the first province in the north-east, it was destined to be the last, and, what is more tragic, to be the lost as well. Its conquest opened really a new chapter in the history of Mughal foreign policy, for, it brought the powerful and independent Mongoloid state of Assam within its pale. The latter could not but look upon the forward march of Mughal imperialism in the north-east as a great political menace which must be nipped in the bud, while Mughal Kamrup on its part found its natural expansion blocked by the domain of Assam, at the expense of which only it could hope to flourish and stabilise its position and authority.

The conflict of the Mughals with the Ahoms supplies the most interesting and eventful phases in their north-eastern

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frontier policy, which now reaches its full play. The policy towards Assam had already turned defensive by virtue of necessity. The Ahom ruler too at first avoided direct hostility with his troublesome foreign neighbours. Though he readily responded to the appeals for help made by the Koch malcontents and the hill-Rajas of *Dakhinkol* against Mughal overlordship, he refrained from launching into formal warfare as long as he could. This state of affairs lasted practically throughout the reign of Emperor Jahangir.

With the gradual disappearance (by submission, natural demise or otherwise) of the various rebel elements in Kamrup, the way was prepared for a direct conflict between the Mughals and the Ahom king, and the first open encounter began about the ninth regnal year of Shah Jahan. Though the bitter trade rivalry and jealousy on the part of the Mughals remains the dominant factor in the struggle, it was precipitated by an unprovoked attack on the Mughal capital by Bali Narayan, the Koch feudatory of the Assam monarch. From the protracted warfare that ensued, the Mughals on the whole emerged victorious. But instead of remaining satisfied with the recovery of their lost possession (Kamrup), they foolishly carried the struggle into the heart of the Ahom country, only to return discomfited, neutralising thereby the fruits of their victory. Both sides having now been sick of war, a peace was concluded early in 1639, which, for the first time, formally and definitely, fixed the boundary of Mughal Kamrup and Assam and also laid the basis of trade and commercial relations between them.

(e) Policy of open warfare with Assam, 1628-1639.

An era of peace, diplomacy and trade intercourse now dawned, for the first time, in the annals of the north-east frontier of Mughal India, which lasted for about two decades (1639-58). The rich forest produce and the zoological resources of Assam had already excited the cupidity of the Mughals, and they showed themselves quite eager to overcome

(f) Policy of peace, diplomacy and trade intercourse with Assam, 1639-1658.

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the innate aversion of the Assamese for trade (particularly with foreigners) and were now apparently successful in doing so. Trade disputes were, of course, of inevitable occurrence, and these formed frequently the subject of diplomatic intercourse of this period. Boundary quarrels, extradition of political refugees, and violation of liberty, rights and privileges of individual subjects were other potent causes of inter-state friction which were sought to be remedied through the medium of diplomacy. Thanks to the moderation, tact, patience and pacific disposition of the Mughal *faujdar* and the Ahom Bar Barua, peace was fairly maintained during the last twenty years of Shah Jahan's reign.

Genesis of the renewal of imperialistic fervour in the north-eastern frontier.

The great political confusion and weakness of central authority engendered by the War of Succession, following the illness of Emperor Shah Jahan, disturbed the peace of the distant north-east frontier of Mughal India as well, and gave rise to a new phase in its history. The reigning Assam king took advantage of the helplessness of Mughal Kamrup to capture it after a short struggle from the hands of the Koch Bihar king Pran Narayan, who had already anticipated him in an attack thereon (thus breaking the traditional policy of faithful vassalage pursued for about half a century). As soon as the troubles of disputed succession had ended in Aurangzib's final triumph, the Mughal Emperor deputed the Bengal viceroy Mir Jumla to restore his authority in the north-east frontier, by the punishment of the refractory Koch vassal and by the recovery of Kamrup from the hands of the king of Assam.

(g) Mir Jumla's Koch Bihar and Assam campaign (1661-63)—the grand climacteric of Mughal north-east frontier policy.

The appearance of Mir Jumla in the north-east frontier is a great landmark in its history. After the lapse of more than half a century (excepting the short but inglorious venture in Assam of the autumn of 1638), Imperial policy in the north-east again turned definitely aggressive and, in fact, reached its culminating point. Koch Bihar was subjugated and annexed to Mughal

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India, after an existence of more than a century and a quarter as a separate state, and Kamrup was reconquered. This was followed by a gigantic attempt upon Assam, with a view to making it the base of an attack on Burma and the distant China. It was the most daring and audacious piece of imperialistic venture, almost unparalleled in the annals of Mughal India, and has not probably been surpassed even in modern times. Though undertaken by the greatest general of the age, the Assam expedition was really an impracticable and visionary scheme, which ended in great discomfiture.

Its disastrous results.

The ultimate effects of the Assam campaign were disastrous to Mughal India. Koch Bihar slipped away while Mir Jumla was still in the thick of the Assam campaign, and, though it was made to feel the weight of Imperial authority once more, it never again formed a part and parcel of the Mughal domain. What affected the Mughals most severely is the strong nationalist reaction which the aggressive military promenade of Mir Jumla gave rise to in Assam and the first fruits of which were reaped within four years of his retreat from that land.

(h) Last phase of Mughal policy purely defensive with regard to Assam, 1663-82.

The Mughals lost Kamrup in the autumn of 1667, and, for the next fifteen years, made a most frantic effort to save that frontier province from the clutches of the Assam king. Threatened with their very existence in that quarter, they now pursued a purely defensive warfare till the end. This, the last phase in their north-east frontier policy, was a total failure. By 1682, the Mughals were compelled, once for all, to give up their pretensions to Kamrup and to remain satisfied only with the south-western portion of the Brahmaputra valley up to Rangamati, as the residue of their empire in North-Eastern India.

The Mughals attempted to compensate themselves as it were for their loss of Kamrup by indulging in a morbid policy of territorial expansion at the expense of the already decaying

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vassal state of Koch Bihar, then in the throes of prolonged internal confusion and disorder. One by one, the outlying districts were snatched away and added to the Mughal empire, till the disintegration of Koch Bihar was completed at the end of the seventeenth century.

But deliberately aggressive towards Koch Bihar, 1685-1711.

The net result which Mughal foreign policy attained in the north-eastern frontier, after the lapse of a century, is far from satisfactory. The desire to attain natural boundaries in that direction was not at all fulfilled, and before the first half of Aurangzib's reign had ended, the last vestige of Mughal influence disappeared from Kamrup. To their inordinate greed for grasping what was almost unattainable, the Mughals sacrificed what was really their own by virtue of conquest and long possession. Only Koch Bihar was retained in political subjection and, what is worse, was gradually dismembered to swell the pampered but decadent fabric of Mughal India.

Net result of Mughal foreign policy in the north-east frontier.

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APPENDIX A.

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY.

A.D.	
1576—	Conquest of Bengal by Akbar.
1578—	Akbar's defensive alliance with Koch king Nara Narayan.
1581—	Rebellion of Raghu Deb resulting in the founding of Kamrup state.
1587—	Death of Nara Narayan and the accession of Lakshmi Narayan.
1588—	Assumption of independent status by Raghu Deb.
1594—	Raja Man Singh took charge of Bengal *subah*.
1596—	Formal acknowledgment of Mughal sovereignty by Lakshmi Narayan.
1597—	Raghu Deb's futile attack on the Koch domain followed by an equally futile Koch-Mughal invasion of the territory of Isa Khan, the Afghan ally of Raghu Deb.
1599—	Death of Isa Khan.
C. 1599-1600—	Raghu Deb's marriage alliance with Ahom king Sukhampha or Khora Raja.
1603—	Death of Raghu Deb and the accession of Parikshit Narayan to the Kamrup throne: death of Sukhampha and the succession of Susengpha or Pratap Singh in Assam.
1605—	Death of Akbar and the accession of Jahangir to the Mughal throne.
1606—	Kutubu-d din Khan Koka appointed *subahdar* of Bengal.
1607—	Jahangir Quli Khan posted to Bengal.
1608—	Alau-d din Islam Khan appointed viceroy of Bengal.
1609—	Reduction of Koch Bihar to tributary vassalage by Alau-d din Islam Khan.
1609—	Similar attempt in Kamrup, proving futile.
Winter of 1612—	Mughal expedition against Kamrup.
C. July, 1613—	Mughal conquest of Kamrup.

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C. August, 1613— Death of Alau-d din Islam Khan followed by the appointment of his brother Qasim Khan as the viceroy in Bengal and of Abdu-s-salam as the governor of Kamrup.

C. May, 1614— Arrival of Qasim Khan at Jahangirnagar (Dacca) followed by the confinement of Parikshit Narayan, the ex-king of Kamrup.

C. August, 1614— Lakshmi Narayan, the Koch king, also put in confinement at Jahangirnagar.

C. December, 1614— Outbreak of revolts in Khonthaghat (Kamrup) and in Koch Bihar and their suppression : appointment of Abdul Baki as the governor of Kamrup.

C. Feb.,-Oct., 1615—More rebellions and their failure.

C. December, 1615— Disastrous invasion of Assam by Sayyid Abu Bakr.

C. end of Jan., 1616—Capture of Dhamdhama fort (the stronghold of the rebel chief Sonatan in Kamrup) by the Mughals.

C. spring of 1616— Futile attack on Kamrup by Bali Narayan (brother of Parikshit Narayan), a feudatory of the Ahom king.

C. Sep.,-Oct., 1616— Capture of the strategic hill-fort of Ranihat in *Dakhinkol* by Mirza Nathan, an Imperial officer.

April, 1617— Supersession of Qasim Khan by Ibrahim Khan Fathjang in the viceroyalty of Bengal and the appointment of Qulij Khan as the governor of Kamrup.

C. middle of 1617— Futile conspiracy of Shaikh Ibrahim, the *krori* of Kamrup, with the Ahom king followed by Bali Narayan's capture of Pandu.

C. end of 1617— Arrival of Ibrahim Khan Fathjang at Jahangirnagar followed by the release of Lakshmi Narayan and Parikshit Narayan from confinement.

C. end of 1617— A grand attack on Hajo (the capital of Mughal Kamrup) by Bali Narayan aided by the Ahoms, proving fruitless.

Early spring, 1618— Mirza Nathan formally posted to *Dakhinkol* to consolidate Imperial authority there.

End of spring, 1618—Arrival of Lakshmi Narayan at Hajo to render personal service under Shaikh Kamal, the new governor of Kamrup.

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C. spring of 1619—	Conquest of Amjanga and Rangjuli forts by Mirza Nathan followed by the submission of most of the hill-chiefs of *Dakhinkol.*
C. autumn of 1619—	Rebellion of the hill-chiefs and their union with the Ahoms leading to the conquest of Mirza Nathan's headquarters at Ranihat and to his flight from *Dakhinkol.*
C. winter of 1619—	Qulij Khan reappointed governor of Kamrup.
C. Jan., 1620—	Defeat of Bali Narayan and the Ahoms by Mirza Nathan at Minari followed by the final submission of the hill-chiefs.
C. autumn of 1621—	Rebellion in Khonthaghat and its quelling.
C. winter of 1622—	Shaikh Kamal reappointed governor of Kamrup.
April, 1623—	Mirza Bahram appointed governor of Kamrup.
C. end of 1623—	Suppression of the rebel chief Jadu Naik in *Dakhinkol.*
„ „	Entry of the rebel Prince Shah Jahan in Bengal.
May, 1624—	Defeat and death of Ibrahim Khan Fathjang in an encounter against Shah Jahan followed by the latter's selection of Dorab Khan as the viceroy of Bengal and of Zahid Khan as the governor of Kamrup.
1625—	Mahabat Khan appointed viceroy of Bengal (after the flight of Shah Jahan therefrom) which was ruled by his son Khanahzad Khan on his behalf.
1626—	Bali Narayan's attack on *Dakhinkol.*
1626—	Mukarram Khan appointed viceroy of Bengal.
C. end of Feb., 1627—	Death of Koch king Lakshmi Narayan and the succession of his son Bir Narayan.
1627—	Fidai Khan appointed viceroy of Bengal.
October, 1627—	Death of Jahangir.
1628—	Accession of Shah Jahan to the Mughal throne.
1628—	Qasim Khan appointed viceroy of Bengal : Abdu-s salam selected as the governor of Kamrup.
1632—	Azam Khan appointed viceroy of Bengal.
1633—	Death of Bir Narayan and the accession of his son Pran Narayan.
1636—	Islam Khan appointed viceroy of Bengal.
March, 1636—	Outbreak of open war between the Mughals and the Assamese with Bali Narayan's attack on *Dakhinkol.*

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C. April, 1636— Futile Assamese attack on Hajo followed by the capture of Srighat and the occupation (by treacherous surrender) of Pandu.

C. end of Oct., 1636—Recovery of Srighat by the Mughals.

C. early Nov., 1636—Decisive Mughal naval defeat at Srighat followed by the surrender of Sualkochi and the withdrawal of the navy to Dhubri.

C. end of Nov., 1636–Surrender of Hajo to the Assamese.

C. beginning of 1637–Second phase of the war begins with the recovery of *Dakhinkol* and the capture and execution of Raja Satrajit by the Mughals.

C. end of Nov., 1637–Crushing defeat of Bali Narayan and the Ahoms at Burpetah followed by the recovery of Hajo, Srighat and Pandu by the Mughals.

Beginning of 1638— Mughal naval victory at Kajali.

C. October, 1638— Death of Bali Narayan.

November, 1638— Futile Mughal attack on Samdhara followed by the severe naval defeat at Duimunisila and the loss of Kajali.

C end of 1638— Allah Yar Khan appointed governor of Kamrup.

February, 1639— Treaty of peace signed by the Mughals and the Assamese, and the transfer of the headquarters in Kamrup from Hajo to Gauhati by the former.

C middle of 1639— Appointment of Prince Shuja as viceroy of Bengal.

1641— Death of Pratap Singh, the Ahom king.

1646— End of Allah Yar Khan's rule in Kamrup.

1647-48— Visit of Mughal friendly missions at the Ahom Royal Court.

1648— Accession of Sutyinpha or Jayadhvaj Singh to the Ahom throne

C. 1654— Mir Lutfullah of Shiraz appointed governor of Kamrup.

1657— Illness of the Emperor Shah Jahan giving rise to a prolonged war of succession.

C. 1658— Rebellion of Pran Narayan and his occupation of Kamrup followed by the Ahom conquest of the same.

1659— Formal enthronement of Aurangzib as the Mughal Emperor.

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1660—	Appointment of Mir Jumla as the viceroy of Bengal.
December, 1661—	Conquest of Koch Bihar by Mir Jumla.
January, 1662—	Mir Jumla's attack on Assam.
March, 1662—	Decisive naval victory off Kaliabar followed by the flight of the Ahom king and the occupation of his capital—Ghargaon, by Mir Jumla.
C. May, 1662—	Recovery of Koch Bihar by Pran Narayan.
May-Oct., 1662—	Persistent Ahom attack on the beleaguered Mughal army at Ghargaon and the outposts surrounding it.
End of Oct., 1662—	Mir Jumla resumes the offensive and inflicts a number of defeats on the Assamese.
End of Nov., 1662—	Mir Jumla taken ill.
Jan., 1663—	Conclusion of peace with the Ahoms and the retirement of Mir Jumla from Assam.
C. February, 1663—	Rashid Khan appointed governor of Kamrup.
March, 1663—	Death of Mir Jumla.
November, 1663—	Death of Jayadhvaj Singh and the succession of Chakradhvaj Singh as the king of Assam.
1664—	Shaista Khan appointed viceroy of Bengal.
December, 1665—	Pran Narayan reaffirms Imperial vassalage.
1666—	Death of Pran Narayan and the accession of his son Mod Narayan to the Koch throne.
C. beginning of 1667—	Sayyid Firuz Khan appointed governor of Kamrup.
August, 1667—	Resumption of Ahom-Mughal warfare—Chakradhvaj Singh's attack on Kamrup.
Nov.,-Dec. 1667—	Capture of Gauhati followed by the occupation of forts Srighat and Pandu and the flight of the Mughals towards the Manas.
C. Feb., 1668—	Arrival of the Imperial commander Raja Ram Singh in Kamrup.
Feb.,-Nov., 1669—	Indecisive warfare between the Mughals and the Ahoms followed by abortive peace negotiations.
C. Dec., 1669—	Death of Chakradhvaj Singh and the accession of Udayaditya Singh.
March, 1670—	Resumption of hostilities.
March, 1671—	Withdrawal of Raja Ram Singh to Rangamati after a series of reverses at Srighat, near the Sesa river and in *Dakhinkol.*

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August, 1673—	Death of Udayaditya and the beginning of political confusion in Ahom state.
1677—	Fidai Khan appointed viceroy of Bengal.
1678—	Sultan Muhammad Azim appointed viceroy of Bengal.
Feb., 1679—	Treacherous surrender of Srighat and Gauhati by the Bar Phukan to the Mughals.
1680—	Shaista Khan reappointed viceroy of Bengal.
1680—	Death of Mod Narayan and the succession of Vishnu Narayan.
1681—	Death of Lara Raja and the accession of Gadadhar Singh—a strong and capable monarch.
C. 1682—	Death of Vishnu Narayan and the accession of Mahendra Narayan.
June, 1682—	Despatch of an Ahom army to capture Gauhati.
C. July, 1682—	Mughal reverses near the Sarania hill and Pani-duwar leading to the evacuation of Gauhati and the final loss of Kamrup.
1685—	Mughal invasion of Koch Bihar.
1687—	Renewed attack on the Koch kingdom and the occupation of the *chaklas* of Fathepur, Karjihat and Kakina.
1689—	Ibrahim Khan appointed viceroy of Bengal.
C. 1691-93—	Renewed Mughal invasion of Koch Bihar and the annexation of the country up to Boda, Patgram and Purba Bhag.
1695—	Death of Mahendra Narayan and the succession of Rup Narayan.
1696—	Death of Gadadhar Singh and the accession of his son Rudra Singh.
1697—	Azimu-sh-shan appointed viceroy of Bengal.
1704—	Murshid Quli Khan appointed viceroy of Bengal.
C. 1711—	Last Mughal depredation on Koch Bihar.

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APPENDIX B.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE KOCH BIHAR, KAMRUP AND ASSAM KINGS AND THE CONTEMPORARY MUGHAL EMPERORS WITH THEIR BENGAL VICEROYS.*

Koch Bihar king	Kamrup king	Ahom king	Mughal Emperor	Bengal viceroy
Biswa Singh 1529—55		Dihingia Raja 1497—1539 Garhgaya Raja 1539—1552	Humayun 1530—56	
Nara Narayan 1555—87	Raghu Deb 1581—1603	Khora Raja 1552—1603	Akbar 1556—1605	Khan Jahan 1576—79 Muzzafar Khan 1579—80 Raja Todar Mal 1580—82 Khan Azim 1582—84 Shahaz Khan 1584—88 Sayyid Khan 1588—93 Raja Man Singh 1594—1605
Lakshmi Narayan 1587—1627	Parikshit Narayan 1603—18	Burha Raja 1603—41	Jahangir 1605—27	Kutubu-d din Kokaltash 1606—07 Jahangir Quli Khan 1607—08 Alau-d din Islam Khan 1608—13 Qasim Khan 1613—17 Ibrahim Khan Fathjang 1617—24 Dorab Khan 1624 (Rebel Prince Shah Jahan's nominee) Mahabat Khan through his son Khanahzad Khan 1624—26 Mukarram Khan 1626 Fidai Khan 1627
Bir Narayan 1627—33	Bali Narayan (Raja of Darrang only) 1615—38		Shah Jahan 1628—58	Qasim Khan 1628—32 Azam Khan 1632—36
Pran Narayan 1633—66		Bhaga Raja 1641—44 Nariya Raja 1644—48 Jayadhvaj Singh 1648—63		Islam Khan 1636—39 Prince Muhammad Shuja 1639—57
Mod Narayan 1666—80		Chakradhvaj Singh 1663—69 Udayaditya Singh 1669—73 Ramdhvaj Singh 1673—75 Suhung 1675 Gobar 1675 Sujimpha 1675—77 Sudaipha 1677—79	Aurangzib 1659—1707	Mir Jumla 1660—64 Shaista Khan 1664—77 Fidai Khan 1677
Vasudeva Narayan 1680—82		Lara Raja 1679—81		Prince Muhammad Azim 1678—80
Mahendra Narayan 1682—95		Gadadhar Singh 1681—96		Shaista Khan 1683—89 Ibrahim Khan 1689—97
Rup Narayan 1695—1715		Rudra Singh 1696—1715		Prince Azimu-sh-Shan 1697—1704 Murshid Quli Khan 1704—25

* This list is based mainly on the Ahom and Assamese *Buranjis* and the Koch and Persian chronicles including the *Riyaz*, besides the modern historical works of Stewart, Hunter, Gait and H. N. Chaudhuri.

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APPENDIX C.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. *

A. Contemporary Persian Chronicles.

1. *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, by Minhaju-s Siraj, Persian text, Bibliotheca Indica Series, edited by Major Lees ; and the English translation in full by Major Raverty (London, 1881) and in part in E. & D., (Elliot and Dowson's History of India) Vol. II.
2. *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, by Ziau-d-din Barani, Persian text, Bibliotheca Indica Series, and the English translation in part in E. & D., Vol. III.
3. *Tarikh-i-Firishta*, by Mahammad Qasim, Persian text, Lucknow, and the English translation in full by Major Briggs, Vols. I -IV.
4. *Tabakat-i-Akbari*, by Khwaja Nizamu-d din Ahmad, Persian text, Lucknow, and the English rendering in E. & D., Vol V.
5. *Muntakhab-ut-Twarikh*, by Abdul Qadir Badaoni, Persian text, Bibliotheca Indica Series, and the English translation by Ranking, Lowe and Haig, and in E. & D., Vol V.
6. *Akbarnamah*, by Shaikh Abul Fazl Allami, Persian text, Bibliotheca Indica Series, and the English translation by H. Beveridge in three volumes and in E. & D., Vol. VI. As Beveridge's translation appears to be quite reliable, it has been freely utilised by me.
7. *Ain-i-Akbari*, by Abul Fazl, Persian text, Bibliotheca Indica Series, and the standard English translation in three volumes by Blochmann and Jarret (published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal).
8. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, the autobiography of the Emperor Jahangir, Persian text, edited by Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1863-64), and its English rendering (for the Oriental Translation Fund, New Series) by Rogers and Beveridge in two volumes, and also in E. & D., Vol VI.

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* It should be noted that as the main authorities—Persian, Assamese and otherwise, have already been critically examined in the Introduction, a detailed discussion has been avoided and only a bare sketch of these as well as of the other sources of information has been furnished here.

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9. *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, by Mirza Nathan Alau-d din Ispahani, Persian Manuscript Number "Gentil 42 Supplement 252, described on page 356 (entry No. 617) of E. Blochet's *Catalogue des Manuscrits Persans Bibliotheque Nationale, tome premiere* (Paris, 1905)." A rotograph of the MS. made at Paris for the Dacca University Library has been used by me. Perhaps the most exhaustive account of the reduction of Koch Bihar to vassalage and the subjugation of Kamrup by the Mughals is given by the author on p. 15a and pp. 106a-119a. A sketch of the chequered careers of kings Lakshmi Narayan and Parikshit Narayan and a comprehensive history of Kamrup under Mughal rule is found on pp. 146b-295b (with a few digressions), and occasional references to Kamrup affairs occur on pp. 296a-325b. This portion of the MS. is extremely valuable, for, it fills a great gap in current history and is corroborated generally by the Ahom and Assamese *Buranjis* and contemporary Persian works.

10 *Padishahnamah*, by Abdul Hamid Lahori, Persian text, Bibliotheca Indica Series, 2 Vols. A brief sketch of the conquest of Kamrup and of its administration during Jahangir's reign is followed by a detailed account of the Ahom-Mughal warfare in Shah Jahan's rule in Vol. II. pp. 46-90. Blochmann's analysis of this portion of the *Padishahnamah* in JASB, 1872, pp. 53-62 appears to be faulty and should not be implicitly relied on. E. & D., Vol VII, also contains extracts from this work.

11. *Alamgirnamah*, by Mirza Muhammad Kazim, Persian text, Bibliotheca Indica Series. The genesis and details of the Koch Bihar and Assam campaigns of Mir Jumla appear on pp. 677-737 and 776-813. A defective summary of the brief description of Assam and the Assamese given in the *Alamgirnamah* was published in English by Vansittart in *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. II p. 171 *et seq*, and in *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XVI pp. 222-26. Some portions of this work are translated in E. & D., Vol VII.

12 *Masir-i-Alamgiri*, by Muhammad Saqi Mustaid Khan, Persian text, Bibliotheca Indica Series. Though "it is very condensed, giving the history of 51 years in 541 pages" it is our only Persian source regarding the post-Mir Jumla period of history, and so its value cannot be overestimated. Extracts from this work appear in JASB, 1872, and in E. & D., Vol. VII.

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13. *Muntakhab-ul Lubab*, by Muhammad Hashim Khafi Khan, Persian text, Bibliotheca Indica Series, 2 Vols., and the English rendering in part in E. & D., Vol. VII. So far as our topic is concerned, the work gives the substance of earlier chronicles, sometimes adding unauthorised touches and making confused statements.

14. *Fathiyah-i-Ibriyah*, by Shihabu-d din Talish, Asiatic Society of Bengal MS. D. 72., and Blochmann's analysis in English in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1872, pp. 63-96. Prof. Sarkar has collated 3 different MSS. and given "a complete and literal translation of the description of Assam and its people about the year 1660, which fills 19 pages in Talish," in the Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Vol. I Pt. II. pp. 182-195. It might be wished that the learned Professor had extended the scope of his valuable article so as to furnish a full translation of Talish's long account of Mir Jumla's Koch and Assam campaigns, for which the common reader has to depend on Blochmann's analysis, which is "evidently made from an incorrect MS. and in great hurry." Yet a camparison of the MS. *Fathiyah* and Blochmann's English rendering would show that on the whole the latter might be relied on, and, when checked with the help of the *Buranjis*, might yield valuable information. I have referred generally to Blochmann's English translation of the *Fathiyah* and only occasionally to the MS., and have also freely utilised Prof. Sarkar's translation.

The Continuation (of the *Fathiyah*) by Shihabu-d din Talish in MS. "The Continuation (Bodleian 589 Sachau and Ethe NO. 240) gives the history of Bengal from Mir Jumla's death to the conquest of Chatgaon by Shaista Khan." Prof. Sarkar published an abstract of its contents and also translated three long passages in JASB, 1906 and 1907. The MS. is important, as it throws light on Koch-Mughal affairs during a part of Shaista Khan's rule in Bengal.

B. Later Persian Works.

15. *Masir-ul-umara*, Persian text, by Samsau-d daulah Shah Nawaz Khan and his son Abdul Haq, Bibliotheca Indica Series, 3 Vols. "Begun about 1742 and completed in 1779," the *Masir* contains biographies, which are very ably written and are full of important historical detail. Those of Islam Khan (viceroy of Bengal, 1636-39), Mir Jumla and Shaista Khan require special

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mention. But where the *Masir* differs from contemporary authorities, its testimony has to be rejected.

16. *Riyaz-us Salatin*, Persian text, Bibliotheca Indica Series. It is "the only history of Bengal and Bihar in Muhammadan times that we possess." It was written about 1787-88 A. D., and is thus comparatively a modern compilation. Further, as Stewart has pointed out, the works treating on the history of Bengal which the author utilised "appear to have been very limited in number, and of course much has been omitted; it is also very deficient in dates." So it is only after careful checking with the help of contemporary authorities that the version of the *Riyaz* should be accepted. So far as we are concerned, the *Riyaz* offers an outline of the activities of the Mughal viceroys in Bengal, who took a leading part in shaping the north-eastern frontier policy of their sovereigns.

C. Ahom and Assamese Buranjis.

1. *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai.* As has already been noted, it offers the most complete indigenous history of Ahom relation with the Mughals. An English translation of this valuable work was made by an Assamese official for the use of Mr. (now Sir E. A.) Gait. Its accuracy has long been recognised by scholars in this line and need not be reiterated here. Through the kindness of the Director of Public Instruction, Assam, I had access to the same MS. translation as was available to Mr. Gait, and I have freely utilised it in the text. As it was not permissible to remove the MS., and as the time at my disposal was short, I could not note down its page numberings in the detailed analysis I made. This has compelled me to refer to it only by name in footnotes. It might here be noted in passing that the other *Ahom Buranjis* I had access to, are very brief so far as the present topic is concerned. A short sketch of some of these appears in Gait's *Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam*, pp. 16-17, while in his *History of Assam*, Introduction, p. XI, they are only barely mentioned.

2. *Buranji from Sukapha to Gadadhar Singh*, in Assamese prose. It contains probably the fullest record of the Muhammadan wars available in that language. Its historical value does not seem to have been fully recognised, though its literary merit has already been appreciated by the inclusion of selected passages in the

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Calcutta University B. A. Course in Assamese. It has been edited by Pandit Hem Chandra Goswami, and published by the *Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti*, Gauhati, under the name of *Purani Asama Buranji*, and I have referred to it as such. It is a pity the learned editor has not added notes illuminative of the text.

3. *Assam Buranji from Khunlung to Gadadhar Singh*, Assamese MS., preserved in the library of the *Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti*, Gauhati. It is particularly useful for the post-Mir Jumla period of our history, and extracts from it appear in the Journal of Indian History, December, 1926.
4. *Assam Buranji from the Dihingia Raja to Pramatta Singh*, Assamese MS., in possession of the *Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti*, Gauhati. It follows *Buranji* No. 3 and is very useful for the same period. It also has been quoted in the Journal of Indian History, December, 1926.
5. *Assam Buranji* from the earliest times to about 1648, in Assamese prose, by the late Jajnaram Deodhai Barua. It is generally known as the *Kamarupor Buranji*, and was published in the *Oroonodaya* of 1853. A replica of this work appears to have been recently discovered in the American Baptist Mission at Gauhati. I was privileged to utilise a copy in possession of Prof. S. K. Bhuyan, the energetic secretary of the *Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti*.
6. A MS. English translation of another Assamese *Buranji* (author unknown) was examined by me in the Office of the Director of Ethnography, Shillong. It is very brief for our purpose, and contains only repetitions of the accounts already noticed.

[Besides the above *Buranjis*, five Assamese MS. historical chronicles (including the replica of *Buranji* No 5) were discovered in 1925 by Prof. Bhuyan in the American Baptist Mission at Gauhati. Though a personal inspection of these works has not as yet been possible, I am assured by Mr. Bhuyan that most of them are mere repetitions of the works already examined, and would thus yield no new light on our period. Some important diplomatic letters are, however, appended to one of these *Buranjis*, a few of which appeared in the Assamese Magazine, named *Sadhana*. A comparison of the letters with those appended to the *Purani Asama Buranji* would show that they agree in substance, though differing occasionally in details.]

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7. *Assam Buranji*, by Kashinath Tamuli Phukan, published under the patronage of the Ahom king Purandar Singh (Sibsagar, 1844). It is apparently based on the earlier *Buranjis* but is very sketchy, and particularly so in regard to our period. I have used a reprint of the work (Calcutta, 1906) borrowed from the Assam Government Library.
8. *Assam Buranji*, by Gunabhiram Barua, first published in Nowgong, 1875. It follows the same general lines as those of Kashinath's work, but is more detailed and systematic. Its dates are, however, not trustworthy and need careful checking. I have utilised a reprint (1897) belonging to the Assam Government Library.

D. Koch Chronicles.

1. *Darrang Raj Bansabali*, by Surjya Khari Daibajna, edited by Pandit Hem Chandra Goswami and published under the authority of the Assam administration (Calcutta, 1917). The work is in verse, and is specially valuable for the early phases of Koch-Mughal history and also for those of Mughal north-east frontier policy as a whole. Mr. Gait published, for the first time, an abstract of this chronicle in English, in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1893. An examination of the work in original has enabled me to touch on many points omitted or passed over rather hurriedly by him.
2. *Rajopakhyan*, by Munshi Jadu Nath Ghose, translated into English by Rev. Robinson. The work is out of print and is not much known. It does not appear to have been utilised by Messrs Blochmann, Gait and Sarkar, but it is frequently mentioned by Mr. H. N. Chaudhury. Though a very modern compilation, it is valuable for supplying the only connected history of Koch Bihar during our period. I have used the copy preserved in the Imperial Library, Calcutta.

E. Contemporary Foreign travellers.

1. The letter of Stephen Cacella, a Jesuit traveller, who visited Dacca, Koch Bihar and Kamrup up to Pandu, quoted in C. Wessels' "Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia," throws new light on the obscure history of Koch-Mughal relation as well as that of Mughal Kamrup during the closing years of Jahangir's reign.
2. *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, by M. Francois Bernier, edited by Archbald Constable, 1891. [Another work of the same author titled *Particular Events, or the most Considerable Passages after*

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the War of five years or thereabouts in the Empire of the Great Mogul (Tom II, London, 1671) also gives a brief account of Mir Jumla's Assam war.]

3. *Storia do Mogor*, by Niccolao Manucci, Irvine's edition, 4 Vols. [Vols II and IV make brief references to Mir Jumla and his campaign].

F. Modern Historical works of special value.

1. *History of Assam*, by Dr. J. P. Wade. It is in MS., compiled during the period 1793—1800, and is of great utility to scholars in this line. Mr. Martin (Eastern India, Vol. II. p. 625) for the first time, refers to it as "too voluminous for insertion" in his book, and a short note regarding it was recently (January, 1925) published in the Cotton College Magazine, Gauhati. The original work, which lies in the India Office Library, was transcribed under orders of the Assam Government. It has since been printed, though not yet put up for circulation. I used the transcribed copy preserved in the library of the *Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti*, and made a detailed analysis of the same. As I was assured that it would soon be published, I did not think it necessary to put down the page references. This explains the bare mention of this work in footnotes.
2. *Descriptive Geography of Assam*, by Dr. J. P. Wade. The whole of it is reproduced in Martin's Eastern India, Vol. III. pp. 626-659.
3. *History of Bengal*, by Major Charles Stewart, first published in 1813. It is really the first serious attempt in English at a connected History of Bengal during the Muhammadan period. The author based his work mainly on contemporary Persian chronicles and the *Riyaz*, besides the Portuguese and other European accounts available. He refers in his own way to the acceptance of Mughal suzerainty by the Koch king Lakshmi Narayan and also briefly alludes to the Assam campaigns of Islam Khan and Mir Jumla, all of which require careful checking with the original Persian works and also the *Buranjis*. Stewart's outline of contemporary political history of Bengal is, however, very useful for understanding the various phases of Mughal north-east frontier policy.
4. *The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India*, by M. Martin, three volumes (London, 1838). The author was entrusted with the task of editing the voluminous report of Dr. Buchanan Hamilton's "Survey of the Provinces, subject to

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the Presidency of Bengal," and did it quite well. But his work does not appear, as yet, to have been fully utilised. Vol. III., which covers Purniya, Rangpur and Assam, is very useful for our purpose. Book II, Chapter II (pp. 403-421), which contains a historical retrospect of Rangpur, is particularly important, for, it alludes to Alau-d din Husain Shah's Kamarupa campaign and to the origin and growth of Koch power followed by the Mughal conquest of Kamrup, and also to Mir Jumla's attack on Assam. Book III (Chapters I, II, III) gives a comprehensive survey of the geographical, social, economic and the political condition of Assam, Dr. Wade's MS. *Descriptive Geography* being fully utilised for the first.

5. *A Descriptive Account of Assam*, by W. Robinson (Calcutta, 1841). The author, who lived long at Gauhati, took great pains to collect materials for his work. His "historical geography" is rather sketchy, the only event of importance for us being the Assam campaign of Mir Jumla. The real value of Robinson's book lies, however, in the detailed account of the physical features of Assam and of its "political geography." The four maps appended to the work have been of great assistance to me in the identification of old places and the ever-changing river courses.

6. *Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam*, by E. A. Gait (Shillong, 1897). It contains a brief review of the more important Ahom and Assamese *Buranjis* as well as of the coins, inscriptions and monuments throwing light on the history of Assam. Of special importance is Appendix II (pp. 30-68), containing a comprehensive "list of writings relating to Assam."

7. *A History of Assam*, by E. A. Gait (first edition, 1905, second edition, 1926). In the new edition, Gait has revised the dates of the Koch kings and has also given a gist of Mirza Nathan's account, though ignoring Dr. Wade's testimony altogether.

8. *History of Aurangzib*, by Prof. J N. Sarkar, 5 Vols. [Vol. II contains a valuable bibliography, while Vol. III, Chapter XXXI, deals with Ahom-Mughal history during the reign of Aurangzib, with special reference to Mir Jumla's invasion of Koch Bihar and Assam.]

9. *Koch Bihar State and its Land-revenue Settlements*, by H. N. Chaudhury (1903). Though the author mainly depended on secondary sources *e. g.*, Stewart's History and Hunter's Statistical Accounts,

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he gives a comprehensive survey of Koch-Mughal relation throughout the period.

10. *The History of India as told by its own Historians : The Muhammadan Period*, by Sir H. M. Elliot, edited by J. Dawson, 8 Vols (London, (1867).

F. Modern works of general reference.

1. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, by W. W. Hunter, Vols. VII and X.
2. *A Statistical Account of Assam*, by W. W. Hunter, Vols. I and II.
3. *Assam District Gazetteers*, by B. C. Allen, Vols. III, IV, V, VI, VII.
4. *The People of India*, by Sir Herbert Risley.
5. *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, by Colonel E. T. Dalton.
6. *Assam Census Report* for 1891 by E. A. Gait.
7. *Banglar Itihash* (in Bengali), two volumes, by R. D. Banerji.
8. *Koch Biharer Itihash* (in Bengali), by B. C. Banerji.
9. *Banglar Itihash* (in Bengali), by Marshman.
10. *An Oriental Biographical Dictionary*, by T. W. Beale.
11. *Dictionary of Islam*, by Hughes.
12. *Musalman Numismatics*, by Codrington.

G. Coins, Inscriptions and Monuments.

The following works have been consulted :—

1. *Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi*, by E. Thomas.
2. *Initial Coinage of Bengal*, by E. Thomas.
3. *Numismata Orientalia Illustrata*, by Marsden
4. *A Catalogue of the Provincial Cabinet of Coins*, Shillong.
5. *A Supplement to the Catalogue of the Provincial Cabinet of Coins*, Shillong.
6. *Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum*, Calcutta, by H. N. Wright.
7. *Supplement to the Catalogue of Coins of the Muhammadan States in the British Museum*, by S. Lanepoole.
8. *Coins and Chronology of the Early Independent Sultans of Bengal*, by N. K. Bhattashali.
9. *Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam*, Appendices— Appendix I, "Inscriptions on Cannon" ; Appendix III, "List of Archæological Remains in Assam."

H. Journals, Maps and Directories.

1. (*a*) *Asiatic Researches.* [Vol. II contains a full, though defective, English translation of the description of Assam and the Assamese in the *Alamgirnamah* by H. Vansittart.]

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1.(*b*) *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* [The Journals for the years 1872—1875 contain a series of articles by Blochmann, Wise and others, illuminative of the history and geography of Muslim Bengal (besides the one by Blochmann mooting the main topic), and a few more by Foster, Peal and others, throwing light on ancient Assam. Of other important contributions, those of Stapleton in the Journals of 1910 and 1922, under the general heading. "Contributions to the History and Ethnology of North-Eastern India," and of M. Chakravarty in the issues of 1908 and 1910, titled "Certain disputed or doubtful events in the History of Bengal, Muhammadan Period" deserve special notice.]

2. *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society.* [Vol. I. Pt. 1 (1915) contains an interesting article on "Assam and the Ahoms in 1660" (being a faithful translation of the relevant portions of the MS. *Fathiyah*) by Prof J. N. Sarkar. Vol. VII. Pt. 1 (1921) has a valuable synopsis of the MS. *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* by the same writer.]

3 *Journal of Indian History.* [Of the articles of special interest, those contributed by Messrs Beveridge and Sarkar (1924) regarding the authenticity of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi*, and that on "Mir Jumla and Ram Singh in Assam" (Dec , 1926,) by Prof. S. K. Bhuyan require mention.

4. *Bengal Past and Present.* [Vol. XXIX (1925) contains an interesting article on "Mir Jumla's invasion of Assam," being mainly a reproduction, with notes, of the original English version of the unnamed Dutch sailor's account by Glanius (London, 1682).]

5. *Indian Historical Quarterly.*

6. *Calcutta Review, Old Series.*

7. *Village Directory* of the Province of Assam, compiled by the Deputy Post Master General of Assam. [Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakshmipur District Village Directories are particularly useful.]

8. Rennell's *Bengal Atlas* (1781).

9. *District Maps* of Assam Province, issued by the Topographical Department, India. [Those of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakshmipur have been of great use to me.]

[It may be noted in passing that the distances recorded in the text for places identified are as the crow flies. These have been ascertained from maps by a measurement in a straight line with a pair of compasses.]

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„ iv	„	„	20	„	latter	„	later
„ viii	„	„	22	„	reduction	„	reduction
„ 48		„	7	*add note*			The Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudra Gupta mentions Kamarupa as one of the frontier kingdoms.
„ 48		„	9	*after* feudatory		*add*	(according to some, only an ally)
„ 49		„	6	*add note*			See Gait's History of Assam, p. 35
„ 80		„	6	*for* its		*read*	his
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„ 126		note*		„ p. 14b		„	p. 15a
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„ „		note‡		„ „		„	„
„ 134		note‡		„ „		„	„
„ 139		„		„ p. 109		„	p. 110b
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„ 336		„	26	„ activies		„	activities
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